

IN[BODYING]THE OTHER:

PERFORMING THE DIGITAL OTHER AS A COMPONENT OF SELF THROUGH
REAL-TIME VIDEO PERFORMANCE

LORNA MOORE

May 2013

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the University of
Wolverhampton for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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B.A (Hons) Fine Art, M.A, Fine Art, MA, Digital Performance

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ABSTRACT

In[bodying] the Other: Performing the Digital Other as a Component of Self through Real-Time Video Performance

Through practice-led research this thesis will explore the phenomenology of interactions between the digital 'other', and the lived experience of the subject through real-time video performance practice. It challenges the assumption that the digital video image is merely or simply other to the subject and aims to re-position the 'other' as an integral part of self where we perform the other. It does this by drawing on Jacques Lacan's Mirror Stage and claims that through digital performance we can suspend divisions between the self and the digital other. By being immersed within the real-time video image the thesis argues we re-enter the Mirror Stage and become captivated within the digital counterpart. Through a disruption in the proprioception of the body there is a crossover of the actual self and digital other which are suspended in each other. Through the use of Head Mounted Display Systems in the work *In[bodi]mental* it is claimed that the actual body can In[body] the other subject as part of self. The thesis argues that the digital other is a component of self mediated through new digital technologies to be understood as an augmented self. Therefore it is through an In[bodied] Mirror Stage we momentarily access the loss of the Lacanian real encountered through the uncanny experience.

This investigation has been conducted in the form of four digital performance projects defined as Inter-Reactive Explorations I-REs (i-iv). The I-REs were subjected to critical analysis and reflection using a variety of disciplines including: psychoanalysis, philosophy, the study of perception, phenomenology, and ethnography. The methodological framework for this research has been coined 'auto-ethnophenomenology'; a mixed-method approach utilizing auto-ethnography and the phenomenological lived experiences of informants. This model has enabled both the 'I' of the researcher and the other to be equally represented from both first person and third person perspectives. The symbiotic relationship between the theory and the practice is exemplified through the phenomenology of interactions between the digital 'other', and the lived experience of the subjects supported by the writings of Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Drew Leder and Rane Willerslev.

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Key Terms

Augmented Self: an augmentation of the actual body mediated through the technology.

Autoethnography: is a method of research that involves self study and reflection where the researcher takes on board being both the observer and the observed.

Auto-ethnophenomenology: has been defined as a way of reflecting on perceptions of lived experience from both positions of the observer and the observed. It is a method which incorporates self-reflexive study and the lived experience of others.

Betwixt: is a term used by Rane Willerslev which connotes a state of being between substance and non-substance.

Digital other: a digital representation of oneself. It is also understood as an entity outside the materiality of self which is separate, different and alien – understood as a virtual representation. It is through this research the digital ‘other’ can be defined as part of the materiality of oneself transposed through the digital video image where matter and media are aligned.

Impossible/lost real: a Lacanian concept which relates to the human condition. It belongs to Lacan’s three orders; the real, imaginary and symbolic. The real is something we lose during his Mirror Stage when we become an individual subject constituted by language. This is understood as the lost real. It is impossible to access as it is unsymbolizable.

Individuation: this is a term used by Carl Jung. It describes the Individuation process as a balance between the conscious and the unconscious (as the psyche) that establishes the person as an individual.

In[bodied] Mirror Stage: An inversion of Lacan’s where the subject does not lose the real but gains access to it through virtuality.

In[body] or In[bodi]ment:. The term is defined as being inside another body and/or to the feeling of being inside another subject .

Infinity Symbol: ∞ is used to create a framework where the theory and the practice intersect.

Imaginary: the Imaginary in this thesis relates specifically to the Mirror Stage where the child imagines what it is through the specular image of itself in the mirror. The imago is the ‘I’ which is based on an imaginary image of itself i.e. the image is not real.

Lacan's three orders: Lacan's three orders of the real, the imaginary and the symbolic are all fields of human existence that shape what we are. His three orders within the Mirror Stage begin with Lacan's the real. This is a concept that relates back to pre-language and resides within the human organism. This is the pre-language, pre-subject phase of human existence. For Lacan we never access the real, it is beyond language. It cannot be represented and it is unsymbolizable. Once something becomes a word or an image, for example the real is lost. The real is always in place and it makes its presence known through its absence in the subject. Once the child enters the Mirror Stage she/he enters into the imaginary where the infant only knows what it is through images, reflections and doubles. This is a closed circuit which is eventually broken through language. Once the child enters into language-the world of the symbolic, it becomes a split subject. The imaginary order is replaced by the world of the symbolic where the infant constitutes itself through signifiers. The access to language creates identities and subjects which can only come about through difference. This is where we only know what a thing or a subject is by excluding another. The reality that the subject lives in for Lacan is a social symbolic reality.

Live chiasm[∞]: the lived experience of a cross-over of the actual body and the digital counterpart using real-time video.

Lived Body: this is used to represent – your own body experienced by yourself, as yourself.

Lived experience: a subject's first hand account of their experience.

Lost real: I am defining the lost real, as the leftover of some primordial phase of human development encountered through the uncanny experience.

Mirror Stage: is a Lacanian process associated with the development of the individual from around the age of eighteen months when the infant first sees itself in a mirror.

Phenomenology: a subject's lived conscious experience and the philosophical phenomenon of perception. It is a way of reflecting on the invisibility of lived experience.

Proprioception: the way the body senses its position within space

Psychasthenia: a state of being when one cannot distinguish between what is self and what is other and there is no distinction between them and the world.

Real-time video: a term used to describe live video feed.

Uncanny: is defined in this thesis as a remnant of the real which we encounter through the In[body] experience.

Virtual: is understood as a description of the digital video image – the non-actual.

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To my parents who never lived to see me finish this research.

Forward

I have been an art practitioner since the late 1980's coming from a fine art background. I began my career as a time-based media artist using film and video which soon developed into video art installations and performances. My concerns dealt with the relationship between the body and the artifact, self and other and the impact the artwork and the viewer had on each other. My practice was influenced by the body/performance art from the 1960s onwards and the video art of the 1980s and 1990s. I embraced this media as a way to challenge the perception of the autonomous art object, including the body, as a means to understand the relational relationships between these two elements.

One way to understand these dualities was to place myself within the practice using performance as a vehicle to do this. However using my body within my practice was always problematic due to the body being represented as an object outside of my subjectivity and /or an object of desire through the beholder. In an attempt to resolve this dichotomy I took myself out of the live performances and began creating performances for the video camera. Through the collaboration of video and performance, the screen of the video became a filter which I felt brought me closer to the art work as a maker but at the same time it distanced the viewer through its lack of liveness. Without a live audience I could concentrate on my body as a site for the artwork filtering the real experience for viewers through the lens. Or I could embark on live performance which took me away from my body being conscious of an audience. I continued to contend with these concerns using a variety of media in my MA in Fine Art.

However it was not until my introduction to real-time digital video and the processes of performance that I managed to return to performativity as a means of re-challenging the relationship between binary self/other elements which manifested as the corporeal self and the real-time digital other. The collaboration between performance and the technology is what began to shape this research project. Despite the polarized oppositions between subject and object the research also began to raise a number of questions regarding the location of the self and the material body within these interactions. It is these questions which formulated the framework for this practice-led research.

Due to the longevity of my practice, it was challenging to know where to begin with this research in the context of how my experience as an artist has shaped the historical discourse I have encountered over the years and vice versa. As a starting point I began this doctoral study at the same time that I was introduced to emerging technologies in my second MA in digital Performance. Before this second Masters degree I was very much a technophobe. It has been through a culmination of the digital technology, the live physical body and the real-time video programme *Isadora* which has brought the fruition of this research into being.

Introduction

This thesis explores the relationship between the physical body and the digital body within real-time video performance and the way the 'actual' live physical body and its digital referent overlap in the form of a digital video representation. The relationship between the physical body and its digital counterpart, understood as the digital 'other', is what has motivated this research. It focuses on the interrelationship between the physical body of the performer and the digital video image as other; and the impact this has on the human subject and its perception of self. What is particularly significant is the way the digital video image is understood as 'other'. The research does not focus on the particularities of otherness, such as defined by certain differences, but it focuses on the fact of otherness, as something which is other to the self. It does this by exploring the phenomenology of interactions between the digital 'other', and the lived experience of the subject. Similarly, when speaking of the self this thesis refers to the whole person as a material and immaterial being. The following research question arose as a result of this enquiry to understand the impact this relationship has on the formation of self within digital performance practice:

How might the lived experience of digital performance enable the subject to step into the digital 'other' to understand more about the self through the phenomenology of the digital other?

Coming from a fine art background it is important to define what one means by digital performance. When I refer to performance practice I am merely discussing the live interactions between subjects and objects. Within the context of video performance it is not defined by the traditional proscenium stage, audience and performer. It is

defined more by the live interactivity that integrates the work, the artist and the viewer in what is both a material and immaterial connectedness. It focuses on the interactions in the moment. The digital video technology is understood as the mediator between the actual self and the video image as other. So throughout this thesis digital performance is understood as a real-time video interaction in the moment.

My art practice is located within the happenings of the 1960s and 1970s, and video art of the 1980s and 1990s. It is these histories which suggested the scope of this research within the field of video performance. Historically my practice has been influenced by these traditions including such works as: Nam June Paik's *TV Cello* (1971),¹ Rebecca Horn's performance *Finger Gloves* (1972)² Marina Abramovic and Ulay performances *Breathing In/Breathing Out* (1977)³ the video art of Gary Hill, *Tall Ships* (1992)⁴ and Bill Viola's *The Crossing* (1996).⁵ Also Joan Jonas, film performance *Disturbances* (1974)⁶ Tony Oursler's video installations⁷, Paul Sermon's *Telematic Dreaming* (1997)⁸ Gillian Wearing *2 INTO 1* (1997)⁹ and Rafael Lozano-Hemmer *UnderScan* (2012)¹⁰. These artists and others will be discussed in greater detail in chapter one (pp. 42-49) to articulate the way they have influenced my practice through their use of the body and technology.

However, though this thesis is coming from a different approach which draws on performance and analogue video, the research explores the transition from analogue to digital advancing my practice as a video performance artist. It is important to note that the shift from analogue to digital does not encompass cyberspace and virtual worlds within contemporary art practice. This is because the construction of self within virtual worlds is less of a concern than understanding the way the self is constructed and understood when we interact with the real-time self projected video

image. Previously my concerns between the self/other relationships had been through pre-recorded analogue video. It was not until I encountered the real-time digital element of these interactions that the affordances of digital technology enhanced my practice to investigate the impact the actual and digital relationships had on the self projected image as other and ones perception of self. The meeting place between the digital and the actual image has advanced my practice creating new encounters and relational experiences. Though the technology has facilitated this research the art practice has led the research in raising new questions with regard to binary self/other oppositions.

It is also pertinent to make a clear distinction between Otherness and the other. The other which I refer to is derived from the Lacanian little 'a' meaning 'other' as subject in his Mirror Stage and not the big Other which Lacan relates to the world understood as the symbolic. What encompasses Otherness is less of a concern when referring to the particularities of political, social, religious, ethical and gendered forms of exclusion and discrimination. The little other 'a' *autre* is specific to the self-projected image understood as other to the self as separate and different. It is the fact the 'other' is outside of the self when we interact with the image that the power relations between them is explored. Rather than presuming that the digital image is a mere representation and therefore inferior to the body the thesis looks towards a negotiated balance – a meeting place between these binary elements through real-time digital performance practice. Subsequently, though I understand that self-image and body image cannot be excluded from these interactions they are not primary considerations.

By drawing on psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan's ideas of the Mirror Stage this thesis proposes that during a series of real-time video performances, the performer re-

enters the Mirror Stage as a subject where the power of speech, as such, is withheld and we are suspended in the world of the Imaginary. This is what Lacan regards as an imaginary image of the self reflected in the mirror. This work will demonstrate how the actual self becomes captured within the digital counterpart through a disruption in the proprioception of the body immersed within the other. As a result this thesis is postulating that it is through digital performance that we can suspend divisions between the self and their digital other. Thus arguing that while the self is reflected within the digital 'other', it can overcome any divisions between them, where self is not lost in the other.

The concept of the other as discussed from a variety of perspectives will be described to explain how it has become a socially constructed phenomenon to understand the notion that the digital counterpart is other to the self. The thesis looks for evidence of an overlap between the digital body and its physical referent to challenge traditional binary oppositions of the self/other dichotomy. This includes the assertion that when the self and digital other meet they can maintain their sameness and difference. It is argued that the lived body can experience being self and other simultaneously within the context of digital performance to understand more about the nature of selfhood. When referring to the 'lived body' it is a term used to connote your own body, as experienced by yourself, as yourself. The thesis claims that when the physical body interacts with its digital counterpart the digital other is a part of the self. These positions overturn and challenge the accepted binary self/other definitions, where the other is understood to be a separate entity to the human subject.

As well as in relation to the other, the self is articulated from the viewpoint of sociologists Charles Horton Cooley and George Henry Mead. Both of these writers

believed the self was constructed through social interactions with others. Cooley's *Looking Glass Self* (1902) is based on how we are shaped through the way others may perceive us. Whereas, for Mead, his notion of the self has been focused on cognitive processes where we can think outside ourselves as object and less on how we feel about the way others see us (1934).

During the onset of this research the word 'double' was used instead of the 'other'. However, as the exploration progressed it became apparent that the term 'double' had more associations with "having two different roles or interpretations, esp. implying confusion or deceit (*double meaning; leads a double life*)". *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* (Thompson 1995, p.405).¹¹ The term 'the double' focused more on sameness, or a pair which was less challenging than the impact 'the other' had on the perception of an entity outside the self as alien, fearful, or separate. The word 'other' also had a much stronger association with the user as both subject and object within telematic digital performance. It was the tensions between the video image as other (not-me) and the relationship with the self (me), experienced as both self and non-self, that began to shape this research. The replacement of the word 'double' to 'other' more closely resembled the dynamic between the duality of the subject/object paradox of being one and the same within psychoanalysis and in particular the writings of Lacan on his 'Mirror Stage'. This is particularly relevant to the interrelationship between the user of the artwork and the artwork itself as both instances are co-dependent on the self/other dynamic. Together with the interaction between the physical body and the digital other this thesis will focus on the impact this may have on one's perception of self. Also it will inform and shape further knowledge and understanding of the lived experience of digital performance.

Paul Sermon's work *Telematic Dreaming* (1997)¹² and the performative experiences of Susan Kozel in her paper *Spacemaking* (1994)¹³ informed my MA practice. These artists were working within the field of telematics (were one could remotely interact with another subject) which had an impact on my practice. It was these artists in conjunction with theorist and performer Steve Dixon who influenced the research. It was Dixon's coining of the term 'digital double' (2007)¹⁴ within the context of digital performance that spurred this research on. Though Dixon's 'digital double' is explored as an alter ego and/or a spiritual emanation it was the phenomena of the 'digital double', the performative 'felt' experiences of Kozel and the work of Sermon, that underpinned the MA practice and began shaping this doctoral research.

In particular it was Sermon's earlier work that motivated this research where he enabled subjects to interact with each other using real-time video conferencing techniques. In *Telematic Dreaming* (1992) two beds are remotely linked via ISDN video conferencing and audiences can remotely interact with each other on a virtual bed. This was first shown at Kajaani Art Gallery and Helsinki Telegalleria Finland. Similarly, in Sermon's *A Body of Water* (1999)¹⁵ a site specific installation which linked the Herten Colliery showers room with the Wilhelm Lehmbruck Museum Duisburg in Germany. He used real-time video images projected onto a wall of water which transported audiences remotely from one location to another. As well as *Unheimlich* (2005)¹⁶ a remote interactive real-time video play which virtually linked up actors in Salford, Manchester UK with audiences in Rhode Island USA. All these works enabled subjects to remotely interact with each other in real-time. His later work which moved into second Life is concerned with blurring the boundaries between online and offline identities. This research, however, is located between the crossing over of the corporeal body and the real-time digital other and the impact this

interaction has on the perception of self. Moreover it has been the writings of Kozel in *Spacemaking* (1994) and *Closer* (2007) which led to a greater understanding of phenomenological experiences. It has been Kozel's account of the morphing of shared experiences between subjects within performance practice and the impact these intersubjectivities have on each other which has contributed to an understanding of phenomenological experiences amongst subjects. She borrows the term 'heterophenomenology' from American philosopher and writer Daniel Dennett where she discusses the shared phenomenological experiences of two different subjects as a shared experience. Though Kozel's interpretation of heterophenomenology has informed this research the term is not used to encompass the methodology as a whole due to the 'autoethnographic' element to the research.

Whilst working alongside these influences it has been the writings of Lacan which has also developed a shift in a critical understanding of the 'digital double' to 'other'. It was the introduction to new digital technologies that made a marked impact on my work as a video performance artist. This together with the phenomenological questions that arose during my practice then determined the direction of this doctoral research.

The thesis is structured into three main chapters. Chapter one presents a contextual overview of the other within theoretical discourses to position 'self projection as other' within a given context. Chapter two is dedicated to a qualitative practice led-study and Chapter three presents the findings from that study in a contribution to new knowledge.

Throughout the thesis we come to develop an understanding of what the other means and the implications it has on the construction of the subject. Furthermore

what is pertinent to this research is the impact Lacan's Mirror Stage¹⁷ has had on the construction of the human subject from a psychoanalytic position. It is through Lacanian discourse we can come to understand the way the social symbolic world of language has established the subject as an individual. By drawing on the Mirror Stage we see how Lacan's work on his split subject has made sense of the relationship between the individual and its perception of reality within digital performance.

This thesis will also present some ideas on how the digital other as a separate entity may be shaped by our fixed viewpoint of ourselves and our interactions with digital counterparts. For instance when we consider the concept of the digital other we imagine an image which is separated and other to the self. These notions suggest that our relationship with the image is alienated and we have no inter-connectivity between them. By looking at the way human to human interactions are connected with each other we can explore the way emotions and behaviour between subjects has a profound impact on one's perception of self. In this way we can look towards emerging technologies which may be able to bridge these gaps and create a seamless connection between the self and the digital counterpart.

Apart from introducing Lacan's Mirror Stage in chapter one the content moves on to Lacan's notion of the impossible 'real'. This is articulated as a stage in human development that cannot be accessed, represented or articulated through the symbolic social world of signifiers. The Lacanian writers Sean Homer, and cultural theorist Catherine Belsey refer to the real as a gap in the signifying chain. It's "an absence that makes its presence felt" (Belsey 2005, p.41)¹⁸. The real is located beyond the symbolic, it is always outside language. It is "that which resists symbolization absolutely" (Lacan cited in Evans 1996, p.159).¹⁹ The thesis attempts

to present the paradox of the real by articulating through digital performance experiences which cannot be expressed through language in a way to understand more of the self. Though the Lacanian real is impossible to articulate this thesis draws a parallel between the lived experience of subjects and the real. Due to the nature of being as hidden, the gap between language and experience may be explored through formulating new encounters between bodies and technology.

Chapter one also discusses the relevance of phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty's work on the *chiasm* (1968), the philosopher Drew Leder's work on *The Absent Body*, (1990) and anthropologist Rane Willerslev work on *Soul Hunters*, (2007) . These writers all give plausible interpretations on the self/other dichotomy where they maintain that the lived body can manifest itself in both roles simultaneously. For example, Leder's work (1990) focuses on the body experiencing itself as both a subject and an object when the body is in pain. It is the body part which is objectified and alien whilst the subject feels it. Meanwhile Willerslev (2007) articulates the importance of body objectification and its contribution to the formation of self. This is most understood when he refers to the Siberian Yukaghirs style of hunting and how one can perform the hunted as other through mimicry. The latter all contribute to the way in which the physical body and its digital referent are a part of each other without losing a sense of self in the other.

Later on in chapter two we come to see the significance of Sigmund Freud's work on the uncanny and its relations with the real where it is postulated that the uncanny may be caught up in remnants of the lost real. This is supported through the art practice where this research identifies the fundamental correlations between the uncanny, Lacan's real and the digital other, which are explored in relation to the self. To explore these possibilities chapter two presents a qualitative practice-led study.

The first part outlines the methodologies used in the practice and the second section introduces the art practice in the shape of four performative Inter-Reactive Explorations (I-REs) as a way forward to answer the overall research question. The thesis challenges the view that the digital video image understood as 'other' is a separate part of self. Instead the research is exploring the prospect that the digital other is a part of self transposed through the technology within digital performance.

The research uses a mixed-method approach using phenomenological and auto-ethnographic frameworks. Utilising elements of these methods resulted in the coinage of the term 'auto-ethnophenomenology'. Drawing on 'autoethnography' has enabled the study to consciously take on board the significance of the 'I' of the researcher who looks 'inward' and 'outward' during this research. This way, the relational aspect between the 'I' of the researcher and the other are considered as important contributions to knowledge. This autobiographical element of the methodology is particularly significant to the first Interactive Reactive Exploration I-RE(i) at the beginning of chapter two where, 'I' as the researcher interact with my digital other through performance to write and narrate a phenomenology from a personalized first person perspective. In her book *The Ethnographic 'I'* (2004) Carolyn Ellis's coinage of the term autoethnography,²⁰ locates the function of the 'I' within ethnographic research as an important factor in subjective experience.

In speaking of subjective experience I-REs ii-iv is significant to this research from the phenomenological perspectives of informants. Therefore the study of a subject's conscious lived experience is paramount to the research. More importantly by drawing on phenomenological perspectives in digital performance one can come to understand and empathize with the lived experiences of others. The performative element to these I-REs is aimed at enabling informants to have a shared knowledge

through digital technology in the moment. The culminations of these methods are therefore defined as 'Auto-ethnophenomenology' – representing the 'I' of the subjects experiences, where the relational aspect between I' and the other are equally represented. Above all it aims to complement the sharing of experiences and empathy between subjects and the researcher and shift between perspectives from 'I' to 'other' as both the observer and the observed. Auto-ethnophenomenology attempts to capture lived experiences in the moment through the art practice. The methodology is an endeavour to capture that which cannot be expressed through language and it focuses on the present as a way to stay in the moment to maintain the agency of the subject.

The second part of chapter two introduces the following four key questions outlined below which will be interrogated through the digital performance practice. These are defined as Inter-Reactive Explorations I-REs I, II, III and IV. These four key questions have been constructed in order to answer the overall research question. Using the following performative methods to interact with the digital other were ways to encounter stepping into the digital image to understand more about the self. In doing so these performances are aiming to experience the digital other as a part of self.

Key Questions

***I-RE (i)** Using video projection technologies can we unite with the digital video image as other and become one?*

This question explored whether we have the potential to experience stepping outside our physical body and step into a digital counterpart when engaged in digital performance

I-RE (ii) Does the digital other have an emotional impact on the self? Can we challenge the impact emotional responses may have on the alienation between self and digital other?

This I-RE expanded the technology to real-time video as a way to step into the self image. These were public performances that audiences encountered and participated in to understand the potential that human emotion has on the notion of the image as digital other.

I-RE (iii) Do we alternate between the physical self and the digital non-self to get to know more of the self and is this oscillation an uncanny experience?

This question developed the technology further where participants encountered their real-time image and a pre-recorded image simultaneously, in an attempt to immerse the participant into the image of the other. This was a way to explore the paradox of perceptually shifting from the actual into the digital through the video technology and the impact this may have on an uncanny lived experience.

I-RE (iv) Can new technological affordances now allow us to embody the self of another?

This I-RE developed using new technologies, such as, head mounted display systems with real-time video technologies in an attempt to embody the image of the other in real-time. The question was concerned with suspending the division between self and other through immersion as a means to merge selves.

The way in which each I-RE had been orchestrated was informed by the next one using similar key elements. Each I-RE grew out of the preceding one in a response to answering the overall research question. The lived experiences of informants and

the researcher were observed and collated in the form of responsive field notes as self-reflective video, audio and written experiences. Consequently the term 'Inter-Reactive' is used to connote the way in which the informants react to the performance exploration and the impact this may have had on them. In other words it was important to capture informants' instinctual reactions to the I-REs as a way to understand the impact the image would have on their perception of self during the moment and after the event. In this way their initial reactions could be compared to their first and second experiences.

Significant to chapter three is how the theory and the practice interrelate with each other and the impact this interaction has on the contribution to new knowledge. The chapter reflects on aspects of the theoretical discourse discussed in chapter one and the findings discovered in chapter two from the digital performance practice. The first section focuses on the outcomes of I-REs I-III and discusses their relevance to the research. In addition it will include a summary of those findings and point out the important elements of those conclusions which have informed I-RE IV entitled *In[bodi]mental*. However it is important to understand that the first three I-REs were also significant to this research in the journey undertaken in coming to understand the impact digital performance has on the perception of the self. A shift in the technology from basic video projection to real-time video projection using head mounted display systems (HMDs) had the greatest impact on contributing to new knowledge to the field of video performance within digital media art practice.

Chapter three proceeds with an exploration of how the art practice has extended the theoretical positions articulated in the thesis. It analyses the findings from *In[bodi]mental* I-RE IV and claims that the video technology Isadora²¹ was integral to how we perceive the self and its constitution. This is explained through the

augmentation of the corporeal self and the head mounted display systems which have extended the phenomenological experience thereby, leading to a number of conclusions where the self can experience more of the self, *in* the digital counterpart, understood as other. These claims are to be substantiated through phenomenological methodologies which reflect on the lived experiences extending the theoretical discourse. These include a re-presentation of Lacan's theory on the Mirror Stage²²; articulated as an In[bodied] Mirror Stage.

To support these ideas the chapter draws on the impact Merleau-Ponty's concept of the chiasm²³ has had on the research which is evidenced in *In[bodi]mental* as a 'live chiasm'; experienced at the intersection between the corporeal self and digital other. Indeed it is this entwinement of the corporeality of two selves²⁴ augmented through the technology which is to be defined as In[bodied] selves. The use of the infinity symbol is discussed later in the chapter to illustrate the chiasm and the way that theory and the practice intersect. The chapter then returns to Freud's *The Uncanny* (1919)²⁴, discussed in chapter one. Thereafter articulating the relationships between the uncanny experience, and the lost real. It also presents views on the way in which the real can be performed as a form of experience within digital performance, particularly exemplified in *In[bodi]mental*.

The last part of this chapter challenges the assumption that the digital image is other to the self with reference to neuroscientists and their work on mirror neurons. It compares mirror neurons to the way we simulate the other, through digital performance, which might contribute to our ability to empathize with another and simulate experience.

As we proceed into the following chapter some of the issues presented in this introduction will move towards an in depth overview of the theoretical duality of the self/other positions, within contemporary discourse. Chapter one begins with a post-modern approach serving as a starting point to investigate the relationships between the actual body and the digital counterpart within real-time video performance practice.

Between the Actual and the Digital: the self projected digital video image as other – a theoretical discourse

In order to challenge existing notions of the binary oppositions between self and other this research has come about through the writings of Lacan on his *Mirror Stage*, (1977)²⁵ hereafter referred to as MS. This chapter begins with the MS as a way forward to articulate the paradoxical relationships between these self/other positions. Later, we will see the relevance of the MS by comparing its key elements to more contemporary theoretical discourse and digital performance practice.

1:1 Mirror Stage

The MS is a process which sees the emergence of the individual subject constituted by language. The paradox of the MS is emphasized during an infant's first encounter with its image in a mirror where the infant sees itself as a whole being and simultaneously feels fragmented and separated from its mother and its surroundings. The infant becomes a split subject where the formation of the infant's identity is based on an imaginary 'I'. The child develops an understanding of itself as a subject through the cognitive awareness of itself as an agent. This occurs around the age eight to eighteen months during the pre-language stage of its development. This pre-subject phase of human development is articulated by Lacan as an organism which can only constitute itself as a subject through language (1977, p.4)²⁶. When the infant sees its own specular image in the mirror it experiences a sense of separation from itself. Before this encounter the child is understood to be in a state of union with its mother and the world. This fragmentation is induced by the child's

underdeveloped motor neurons where it paradoxically sees the specula image as part of itself but the infant feels apart from it.

Moving on from the MS the following text is informative in describing what we mean by the 'self' and its relationship with the other within theoretical discourse. Also it seeks ways to find connections of an overlap between self and other and the impact these states of being may have on subject's experiences.

1:2 The Alignment of Matter (Self) & Media (Other)

In order to make sense of what the self is we need to exclude what it is not, through difference. This is how we relate to the other, as being a construct of what the self is not. We know that the term 'self' is often used in many ways to refer to a person being in the world, such as 'oneself', 'yourself', etc. In order to have a self one must have an 'I' to distinguish the 'being' from the world and others. It was important to this research to explore the term 'self' as the self is differentiated from the other. How and what that difference may be based on will be discussed later. For now it is necessary to focus on what we mean by the 'self'. The dictionary definition of the word self is defined as "a person or thing's own individuality or essence (*showed his true self*) ... a person or thing as the object of introspection or reflexive action (*the consciousness of self*). (Thompson 1995, p.1253) ²⁷ Though it is a simple term it has a very complex relationship with the 'being' of a person and their connection with the world. There are many terms in which the self is often used interchangeably but which have fairly distinctive meanings such as: describing a subject's state of mind within 'self-consciousness' and 'self-esteem' to 'self-relating' 'selfhood' 'self-concept' 'self-recognition' and many more.

The self can also be referred to as the agency of the subject. For example when looking in a mirror the 'I' is the subject and the 'me/you' is the object. The 'I' therefore relates more to the agency and subjectivity of the subject. The subject becomes both the 'thinker' and the 'looker'. This relationship is further extended between human-to-human interactions where the 'me' is reflected in the 'other' person. These ideas are explored by the sociologist Charles Horton Cooley's theory of the 'looking glass self' in his book *Human Nature and the Social Order* (1902).²⁸

The looking glass self is a socio-psychological concept where a person's self grows out of society's interpersonal interactions and the perceptions of others. People shape themselves based on what other people perceive and confirm those opinions on themselves. Cooley's theory of the self is understood as a process where the self is reflected in the reactions of other people, who serve as the 'looking-glass' for oneself. For Cooley, in order to make sense of what we are like, we need to see how others see us. This sense of self we feel we have in our relationship with others can be understood as the core of the self and the driving force behind the looking glass self. Sociologist George Herbert Mead also believed that knowledge of self and others develops simultaneously, where both are dependent on social interaction. According to Mead, the human being is an organism that has a self which converts the agent into a special kind of actor or actress that transforms one's relations to the world, and that gives the subjects' actions a unique character. However, the idea of a self for Mead can only develop if the individual can experience getting outside himself in such a way as to become an object to himself. This self-awareness and/or reflexivity is based on the cognitive view of the self (1934, p.173)²⁹ which Mead thought was more important than Cooley's self-feeling.

Not only does the self relate to the interiority and exteriority of the subject it also has a relationship with identity. The subject is identified by others and also identity places 'oneself' in relation to others, based on many factors including, gender, race, demographics', and so on. As subjects we identify with others in relation to ourselves. Identity is often seen as a reciprocal relationship where 'one' relates to another or within a grouping of some sort. Postmodernism has brought about the display of fractured identities as multiple selves which can be established simultaneously particularly within virtual worlds. It has been through new technologies we can move in and out of many identities at the same time.

Furthermore taking into account the type of personality one may have also plays a crucial role in constituting how others see you or how you may see yourself. Linguistically we refer to subjects as 'self' such as self-destructive, selfless, self-obsessive or narcissistic. When we refer to an individual or even make a statement about our own individuality we are acquiring ownership of ourselves as 'beings' in the world. Thus making it clear that as subjects we are singular objects that stand out from the rest, making a marked difference from others as individuals.

If we take into account the many aspects of self in relation to the body: the subject, the person and the persona – these all suggest the flesh of the subject or the body as a vessel. Conversely the self can also be viewed as an immaterial entity such as the psyche, the soul, the spirit. It has a private and public association with the subject in terms of thought and speech where what one thinks feels, shares and hides, may be described as a secret self or public self. Notions of extended selves have been discussed in many discourses such as New Media, Virtual Reality and the object relations theories of psychologist D.W. Winnicott³⁰ and the extension of consciousness in more contemporary thinking in such works as artist and writer Roy

Ascott's *Reframing Consciousness* (2001) and theorist Malcolm McLuhan's *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (1964). How self is attached to and becomes part of objects has been a main focus of interest for the psychologists in the early 20th Century. This leads to more terms for the self such as the digital-self, the technological-self, the virtual-self and the actual-self. The digital self has been understood to be a construction created by others especially within the online world of teenagers. In his paper *The Digital Self: Through the Looking Glass of Telecopresent Others* (2005) Shanyang Zhao, a sociologist at the University of Philadelphia, asked 'how do people conceive their self when others become disembodied and anonymous in the online world'? In his study he found out how others constitute a 'distinctive looking glass' that produces a 'digital self' that differs from the self offline. (2005, p.387)

In the case of defining the self we can come to understand the many facets that contribute to the formation of the self within contemporary culture. Perhaps searching for a singular unified self will be overturned by a deeper understanding of our ability to have multiple selves which shapes the individual – that is many components which give us more insights into the construction of self. In postmodernism we can already see the complexity of the notion of self and selves as is often seen in the example of the virtual self in phenomena, such as avatars.

Having articulated some ideas on the construction of the self it is important to focus on the different notions of the other and to explore the ways in which the other has been interpreted as a separate body to the human subject. In doing so we can arrive at a better understanding on the way in which the digital other has come to be considered as separate to the self. If the 'other' is to be defined by the Oxford dictionary as ... "separate in identity or distinct in kind ... apart from... different from

...distinct from" (Thompson 1995, pp. 965-966) ³¹ It can be much understood as being singled out as exclusion, as apart from, separate, divided, alien, unfamiliar, and fearful and even an estranged entity.

Although the other is a key concept in human culture this research is more concerned with the notions that have arisen out of contemporary philosophical ideas particularly within the context of new technologies and digital performance. One of the main concerns regarding technology has been the fear of the dissolution of the self within the technology itself, understood as other. For instance Jean Baudrillard claims that it is the over proximity of things that makes one totally instantaneous with them; therefore the function of alienation acts as a protector which gives us the benefit of the doubt that the other exists ³² (Baudrillard 1998). The other for Baudrillard can be understood as a *good* alien that prevents the dissolution of the self. The implication that we can immerse ourselves in 'things' and lose a sense of our self has been met with apprehension where we depend on alienation to survive.

These concerns are consistent with Otto Rank's theory of *The Double* (1972) where he claims that the double is also an insurance against extinction³³. Similarly when we think of the other as being different from the self we understand this functionality to act as a barrier which separates the human subject to enable its survival. Without difference the subject cannot emerge as an individual.

In *an introduction to Jungs's Psychology* (1953) Jung refers to a theory on the *shadow* (my italics) which can also be understood as other. The shadow is what Jung refers to as the other side of us which can be found in the personal unconscious. The shadow is the inferior being in ourselves which is described as the one who wants to do all the things we do not allow ourselves to do – it is everything

we are not ; The equivalent of Mr Hyde to our Dr Jekyll . (Jung 1953 p. 49)³⁴ For Jung the shadow personifies itself so when we unreasonably dislike someone we may actually dislike a part of ourselves we find in the other person.

From Jung's perspective the notion of the shadow may become much more sinister when we interact with our own video image emerging as other. The relationships between self and other become much more blurred when we refer to Virtual Reality and the hyperreal. These are states of consciousness which we encounter in virtual worlds where it is difficult to distinguish reality from a simulation of reality. Within VR there are varying degrees of immersion between self and other where the power of absorption can break down these boundaries and create a feeling of a boundless body. Though VR may be able to create these feelings of immersion it does not hold that if we immerse ourselves within technology we lose the self. These are notions that have been based on the fear and scepticism of technology. Rather than looking at the relationship between self and other as binary opposition's emerging technology is challenging our relationship between the corporeal and the digital. Of course this is specific to real-time video when we interact with our digital counterpart without losing the self. However it is at this juncture that when speaking of immersion throughout this thesis it is most understood in the realm of stepping into and out of a space – as a space of being within.

When we refer to the work of Jean-Paul Sartre in *Being and Nothingness* (1958) we become objectified through the gaze of the other. For Sartre this is when we become a self-conscious object by the presence of another, being conscious of ourselves.³⁵ Sartre argues that the body is a *thing* from the perspective of another, and yet another's body is also a thing from his/her own perspective. Sartre articulates this when he encourages us to imagine him spying through a keyhole and being caught

by another from behind him. His shame is based on the gaze of the other. Sartre sees himself through the eyes of the other as an object of shame where he becomes the object of the gaze (Sartre 1958, p.353).³⁶ Sartre's position is based on a dualism between self and other, subject/object. For Sartre the body cannot be both subject and object simultaneously. Being the subject of experience prevents him being the object of that same experience. Taking these considerations into account the next part of this chapter presents an alternative to the duality of the self/other dichotomy which leads the research in the direction of the interrelationships of these polarized positions.

The question of the lived body being both a subject and an object, self and other in experience is a dual relationship with conflict at its core. In his book *Soul Hunters* (2007)³⁷ Willerslev shares this problem with the body when he asserts; "If it is 'subject' it is 'my body', responsive only to my will. If it is 'object', it is 'other', disobedient of my will". He claims that an adequate account of the self and its body would have to accommodate both of these aspects within a unitary and coherent view of the lived experience. (2007, pp. 63-4)³⁸ Willerslev's view along with those of Lacan, Merleau-Ponty and Leder all contribute to the notion that the lived body can be construed as both self and other in experience. This is true of course when we experience pain. The subject feels it while the body part is other. In critiquing Sartre's position on the subject/object division Willerslev maintains that the body can experience itself from both viewpoints. He refers to Sartre's story of shame and claims that the experience of shame requires a 'double perspective' in which I am both the object of the shame that I adopt and towards myself through another perspective on me, and the subject, who witnesses this shaming objectification (2007, p.65).³⁹

This 'double perspective' is also expressed by Willerslev when he describes the way in which the Siberian Yukaghirs go hunting for their elk. As an imitator the Yukaghirs can enter into relations with significant and powerful others and be transformed but without losing their sense of self in the process (2007, p.26).⁴⁰ This is exemplified when they suspend their identity by dressing and behaving like the elk. Willerslev suggests that the hunter re-enters Lacan's imaginary order where he remains in a loop to overcome the boundary between the hunter and their prey. The hunter goes through the motion of the MS by imagining and imitating the elk whilst abstaining from using language as such. It is only through the use of language that this circular cycle of the imaginary⁴¹ is broken where the imaginary order is replaced by the symbolic order. By gaining access to language identities come about as a result of difference and this is where the infant emerges as a speaking subject. (2007, p.68)⁴²

For the Yukaghirs when they go hunting it is a form of mimesis where their imitation does not take on board the identity of the elk. This liminal domain is where the hunter is neither the actual elk, nor is his transition the elk, so he is not, *not*, elk (2007, p.1).⁴³ He is neither one nor the other – he is between perspectives; he is in a 'betwixt' state. The Yukaghirs deliberately seek to suspend their separation from their prey by refraining from talking in human language.

Similarly there are accounts of the Mbendjele hunter gatherers in the equatorial forest of the Northern Congo Basin who also use mimicry in a similar way to lure their prey. In *As Well as Words: Congo Pygmy hunting Mimicry, and Play* (2009) Anthropologist Jerome Lewis states "I have seen men successfully call three species of duiker, numerous monkeys species, and crocodiles" (Lewis 2009, p.239).⁴⁴ He goes on to say that mimicry enables these hunters and gatherers to perceive themselves as agents interacting with other natural agents such as non-humans,

plants, other humans in nature rather than subjects in a society somehow outside of nature. Anthropologists' Nurit Bird-David and Tim Ingold cited by Lewis state that "This has been usefully described as perceiving the environment as a 'single social field' (cf Bird-David 1990, 1992; Ingold 1994, 1996)' (Lewis 2009, p. 247).⁴⁵ As sophisticated mimics the Mbendjele communicate with a range of agents in the forest using plant signs, fake animal calls, and villagers' languages and customs. Ingold also claims that between these "spheres of involvement there is no *absolute* separation, but they are contextually delimited segments of a single field" (Ingold cited in Lewis 2009, p. 247)⁴⁶ So Hunter concludes that for the Mbendjele the forest is their 'single field' and their relationship with it is totally expressed in the following proverb. "An Mbendjele loves the forest as she loves her own body" (Lewis, 2009, p. 247).⁴⁷

In some contexts both the Yukaghirs and the Mbenejele's, rise above the symbolic order of language, whose principle is to divide and differentiate all identities. Mimicry through sound and movement and using mirror reversals, look-alikes and doppelgangers, they emphasize the essential similitude between the self and the world (Willerslev 2007, p.70)⁴⁸. In essence the Yukaghirs way of hunting can be compared to Lacan's process of the MS where they become captured within the imaginary and bridge the gap between self and the world. Though the function of the MS is a way of allowing the infant to develop as a subject in order to develop a sense of self it may be plausible through digital performance where through mimesis we can perform the other.

The very young child has no sense of differentiation from the world of others, but must learn this by mimetically incorporating an other into the self, which then comes to be experienced as both 'me' and 'not-me'. In this way the child assumes a duality

or doubling of perspectives, which allows it to see itself as another would see it from an external vantage-that is, it comes to observe itself reflexively (Willerslev 2007,p 26).⁴⁹

Taking the view that through mimesis we can perform the other, the body occupies both states of the self/other experience. This is how Willerslev argues that our bodies invite objectification where they are experienced as part of us and as other. By identifying and incorporating the image of another, which in turn becomes the image of itself, the subject begins to represent itself to itself as a separate being. The paradox here is that the subject must experience self-objectification or self alienation to gain a sense of itself as self (2007, p.67).⁵⁰

Likewise in his book *The Absent Body* (1990) Leder describes the way in which the body as subject and object are intertwined. He does this by beginning with the question 'why the body as a ground of experience tends to recede from direct experience'? Leder contends that the corporeality of the body becomes absent and 'disappears' from our experience when we are engaged in a 'purposeful action' which reforms our experience (Leder, 1990, p.1).⁵¹ For Leder, if we forget the body during immersion the 'body conceals itself precisely in the act of revealing what is Other'. (1990, p.22)⁵² In other words when we are immersed in a comfortable/familiar activity we forget the body. Only when we reveal what is other to us do we return to it. According to Leder when the body is healthy ones corporeality disappears into the background. Similarly through the onset of illness, or change the body turns back on itself and becomes more aware of its corporeality where it is no longer alien. In this instance the illness is experienced as a sharp presence threatening the self (1990, p.91).⁵³

The duality of corporeality through its absence and presence is expressed by Leder as a way of experiencing both modes of the self/other experience. He observes the knowledge of the body immersed in an activity where it forgets itself. In doing so he explains the way in which it returns to itself through pain and illness. Rather than focusing on body objectification and alienation from the gaze of the other he goes beyond first person perspectives, whereby self-reflection can be triggered by another. In other words Leder does not see his own subjectivity in the position of an object and vice versa but rather as co-subjects. This is where one comes to see the world not only through their own eyes but as the other sees it, where ones perspective on the world is extended through his/her eyes.

This line of thinking corresponds with the work of Merleau-Ponty in his book *The Visible and the Invisible* (1968). In his section on the *chiasm* he pays particular attention to the interrelationships between self and the world, subject and object where there are no limits between them. In his analysis Merleau-Ponty explains the chiasm within a phenomenological context. This is significant when he uses the term as a metaphor of skin to express the intricate and interlaced relationship between the lived body and the world. Its Greek interpretation *chiasma* coming from the Greek letter X is a crossing over of parts. The chiasmus is referred to as a criss-cross structure which Merleau-Ponty identifies as a:

...double and crossed situating of the visible in the tangible and the tangible in the visible' where he describes an intertwining where 'the two maps are complete and yet they do not merge into one. The two parts are total parts and yet are not superposable (Merleau-Ponty 1968, p.134).⁵⁴

Though the chiasm is a 'reciprocal insertion and intertwining' of the seeing body in the visible body, the skin remains a boundary for Merleau-Ponty. The crossover between the visible and the tangible do not merge, instead they are a part of each other but they do not become 'one' thereby becoming something else. His chiasm enables us to encounter the position where sameness and difference are not lost in each other but a part of each other. "Since the same body sees and touches, visible and tangible belong to the same world". (1968, p.134)⁵⁵

According to Merleau-Ponty we are both subject and object simultaneously where our 'flesh' merges with the flesh, that is the world (1968, p.138).⁵⁶ His metaphor of the skin exemplifies the way in which the flesh of the world and the body are interlinked and enmeshed in each other. This crossover is also reversible which explains how one is both a subject and an object through the act of seeing: I can see and I am also seen. In other words I see the world and I also see me through the other. He incorporates the idea that I see the world and the world sees me, objects look back at me and this is the 'seeing seen' (1964).⁵⁷ Although Merleau-Ponty uses the term reversibility to articulate an 'extraordinary overlapping' or chiasm Susan Kozel has described reversibility as a Mobius strip.

*Reversibility is a 'dynamic', most simply understood geometrically as the shape of the infinity symbol or the Mobius strip where the exchange is in a constant sliding state along a twisting figure-of-eight (Kozel, 2007, p.36-7) .*⁵⁸

The Mobius strip⁵⁹ is a figure which subverts our normal way of representing space. It appears to have two sides but it only has one. When the strip is traversed the two sides become one continuum where it is impossible to locate the cross over between the inside and outside. By locating the chiasm within the centre of the symbol of the

mobius strip we see the intersection of the binary oppositions between self and other reflected in one another which may appear as one continuous framework. No matter how we view the image of the mobius strip, both sides look different, but in reality it is one single surface. The crossover of the lived body and the world, the actual body and the digital image may be caught up in a 'live' chiasmic process through stepping into the digital other. This could result in experiencing a seamless crossover between the digital other and the actual body through stretching the materiality of the body transposed through emerging technologies. When I refer to the mobius strip, I am relating it specifically to the reversibility of the chiasm to demonstrate the irreversibility between the actual body and the digital other and less on infinity. The figure of eight therefore represents a self, which has a front and a back, a past and a future, within the digital performative experience.

The enigma is that my body simultaneously sees and is seen. That which looks at all things can also look at itself and recognize, in what it sees, the 'other side' of its power of looking. It sees itself seeing; it touches itself touching; it is visible and sensitive for itself. It is not a self through transparency like thought which only thinks its object by assimilating it...by transforming it into thought. It is a self through confusion... a self, therefore, that is caught up in things, that has a front and a back, a past and a future... (Merleau-Ponty 1964, p.162-3).⁶⁰

The image of the mobius strip is understood as a metaphor to illustrate the way in which, the digital other feeds back into, and changes the perception of the physical body in the form of the following symbol⁶¹. The intersection between the body as matter and the digital other (as media) where the traversal of the matter and media are reflected in each other. The phenomenology of the digital other is not necessarily a new consciousness but a heightened awareness of self which is continuous

through our altered perception of our bodies. In this way we may be able to experience the chiasm through the digital technology in the context of digital video performance. So far there is nothing to suggest that the chiasm may result in the re-positioning of the digital 'other' as part of self. However, later in chapter three, these ideas are discussed in greater detail when comparing the findings from the art practice in chapter two.

Though the digital refers to the binary numeric forms of digital video, when speaking of the digital other, it is regarded as a digital representation outside of the materiality of oneself – understood as a virtual representation. However it is through digital performance that this research intends to re-define the digital 'other' as the materiality of oneself transposed through the digital video image where matter and media are aligned. Through the art practice, this research addresses our understanding of the relationship between the actual corporeal body and the real-time digital other as an 'in-between' condition of being both self and digital other simultaneously. This gap in knowledge explores the impact real-time digital performance has on our perception of self through stretching the materiality of the body beyond its physical limitations where we experience the image as part of own corporeality via the technology. Using digital processing techniques manipulated through the computer may be understood as ways to experience Merleau-Ponty's chiasm as a digital circuit – a meeting place between the actual self and digital other which changes the actual physical experience. It may be through a deliberate disruption of the proprioception of the body within performance, we might be able to perceptually step out of the body and into the digital counterpart and return back to the corporeality of the body. So what was other may now become part of self.

1:3 Artworks and Context

Throughout art history we have seen methods artists have employed to absorb the viewer within the artwork. During the Italian Renaissance architect Filippo Brunelleschi's (1377-1446) discovery of perspective was based on the principles of illusion to pull the viewer into the painting. From modernism to postmodernism we have seen the way artists have extended the body beyond its natural parameters in the performance happenings of the 1960s through to the video artists of the 1970s and 1980s. The relationship between the self image, as other to the self, and our desire to embody our other through visual reproduction is not a recent phenomenon. It is through these histories we can see the way artists have been concerned with bridging the gap between subject and object, art and artist, artwork and viewer.

The film performance of Joan Jonas in (1974) entitled *Disturbances*⁶² captures a connection between the material body and the world. Jonas filmed peoples reflections in a river keeping the lens of the camera focused on their reflection filling the frame with the ripple of their image. The interaction between subjects and objects is most notable in Korean American artist Nam June Paik's *TV Cello* (1971)⁶³ which was performed by his collaborator and cellist Charlotte Moorman (1933-1991). Using three TV monitors and strings Paik creates a cello played by Moorman where the TV screens showed closed circuit footage of the gallery and the performance as it happened. The human contact between the subject and the media illustrates Paik's concerns of altering sound and vision between subjects and objects and the impact these interventions have on each other. The performances of Marina Abramovic with her partner Ulay Laysiepen in *Breathing In/Breathing Out* (1977)⁶⁴ also known as *Death Self* (1977)⁶⁵ are powerful interventions which attempt to bridge the gap between subjects. In these performances they both clamped their mouths over each

others and drew breath from each other until they filled their lungs with carbon dioxide, attempting to absorb the life/death of the other. This work literally bridges the gap between subjects with severe consequences, resulting in a loss of consciousness during the performance. In another performance both artists stand naked, flanking the doorway to an art gallery, where participants have to squeeze through them to reach the next gallery space. To narrow the gap between subjects and space has been a concern for German performance artist Rebecca Horn, and her work *Finger Gloves* (1972).⁶⁶ Horn literally uses contraptions to extend the materiality of the body – each finger is elongated with balsa wood and cloth reaching to the floor. This performance collapses space between her and objects around her – objects that were distant are now in her reach.

The video artists of the 1980s and 1990s have been using this media to express similar concerns between subjects and objects, self and other. The video installation *Tall Ships* (1992) by American artist Gary Hill⁶⁷, for example, explores the notion of absence and presence through a 12 channel video installation where participants experience the appearance and disappearance of ghostly projected images. Similarly, American video artist Bill Viola's *The Crossing* (1996)⁶⁸ is a large video projection placed in the centre of the gallery with a motion picture on both sides of the screen. Each side has a man walking in slow motion towards the viewer and suddenly stops. On one side of the screen water begins to pour over the man until he has disappeared. On the other side when the man stops we see the man being engulfed in flames until he also disappears. The concerns with mortality are evident in this work where we see the transition of the material body shift from the material to the immaterial. *The Crossing* deals with the binary oppositions between elements of fire and water, life and death, the opaque and the transparent. There are moments in

this work where the body is between these states where there is a seamless transition from one to the other. The gradual crossover of the human condition from one transition to the other is deliberately disrupted in the work of Tony Oursler⁶⁹ where we see disembodied heads projected onto doll like structures. The stark uncanny element to his work brings us closer to our own mortality through a disturbance in our own psyche.

British video artist Gillian Wearing and her piece *2 INTO 1* (1997) is a move closer towards uniting self and other. This work is significant in the way it depicts the emotional conflicts between a mother and her two sons. She invites both the sons and the mother to discuss both sides of their conflict openly and frankly. What Wearing does in this piece is she switches the roles so that the mother appears to speak in the son's voice and vice versa. As we watch the video we see two sons, each sitting on a chair next to one another looking at us. As they speak the mother's voice comes out of their mouths. Later the video switches to the mother who speaks in her son's voice. Seeing this work has been described as 'harrowing' and 'unsettling' by Dan Cameron who was a senior curator at the New Museum of Contemporary Art in New York. We appear to experience the inter-corporeality of these subjects through the overlaying of voice and image. The voices are a part of each other, they are genetically, emotionally and metaphorically connected and overlap as both mother child and/or child/mother. It is here we see the familiar taken out of context and not 'self' and not 'other' but *both*. One explanation for the impact it had on the viewer may be uncanny as we witness the conflicting dislocation between subjects as a form of embodiment. The unsettling quality of this art work has immersed the viewer in the conflict overcoming any boundaries between the subjects in the video and the artwork. In his article on Wearing's work Cameron states:

*Wearing also wants us to be aware that within a family, the separation between self and other is a more subtle distinction, since in pure genetic terms we are the result of the mixing of our two parents... Wearing's art opens up the possibility of greater benefits (but also heightened uncertainty) to be derived from the possibility that one is a composite of many people at once, including the stranger in the street (Cameron 2004, p.101).*⁷⁰

Here Cameron raises the point that Wearing's work scrutinizes the subject's perception of self within society raising some doubt and scepticism of what constitutes 'self'. Wearing's work, has used the video medium to find ways to demonstrate the overlap between subjects.

Using real-time video in the work *Telematic Dreaming* (1992) by British artist Paul Sermon is a prime example of this overlap of two subjects. In this work we see the interaction of two performers connected in remote locations via real-time video technology. Both performers can see the other as a real-time video projection where they can remotely interact with each other. Performer and theorist Susan Kozel was the main constant performer in this work, inviting people to lay on a virtual bed with her. In her paper *Spacemaking* (1994) written as a response to this work she articulates the felt experiences of the other performer during these interactions. Kozel gives a first person account of the impact the experience had on her and the strength that vision has on our touch sensibility. This particular work by Sermon and Kozel's experience are most poignant to this research. In his later works such as *Mirror OnThe Screen* (2012)⁷¹ he collaborated with digital media artist Charlotte Gould. Here Sermon is still concerned with telepresence where he moves into the world of second life. Here the virtual avatar comes face to face with its physical

counterpart. This work attempts to blur the boundaries between online and offline identities.

The collaboration between the German computer engineer Frieder Weiss, an expert in real-time computing and interactive systems, and dancer Emily Fernandez, they created *Schlamp* (2003)⁷². This interactive video installation uses Eyecon, a motion sensing tracking system. What looks like a real-time video projection, is a woman in a red dress lying on the ground. The projected image of the woman on the floor speaks attracting attention. The interactive system detects the collision of a live person with the projected image. Looking down at the woman in the projection some audiences avoided walking on her while others jumped on her image. The varying degrees of abuse and respect the projected video image encountered was also experienced by Kozel in *Telematic Dreaming*. Similarly in *UnderScan* (2012)⁷³ Rafael Lozano-Hemmer's interactive video installation also had a similar impact on audiences in London's Trafalgar Square. In the work, passers-by are detected by a computerized tracking system, which activates video-portraits projected within their shadow. These projections appear and disappear on the ground of Trafalgar Square activated by real-time shadows of participants. Also working with digital doubles, performance artist Mary Oliver, in *Mother Tongue* (2001-2002)⁷⁴ is a video performance where she performs as all members of her family simultaneously controlled by the computer. These hilarious dialogues enable Oliver to stand in the shoes of her family members and become a part of their subjectivity without losing a sense of her own selfhood.

These former works articulate the way artists have a desire to connect subjects through video and performance practice. The space between subjects is explored by media artist Thecla Schiphorst. Her work incorporates using body wearable's to

connect subjects where the technologies attempt to overlap the actual and the digital, self and other. In *Bodymaps: artifacts of Touch* (1996) the work focuses on the relationship between the digital body and the actual body through touch. In this computer interactive sound and video installation participants walk into a dimly lit space and come across a table like structure draped with a white velvet tablecloth. Participants see a still video image projected from above onto the table top. By caressing the velvet cloth you can interact with the video image of a woman.

The piece uses a specially designed sensor surface that is embedded beneath white velvet. Touch and proximity sensors detect a participant's presence and contact with the surface. The piece is silent until caressed. It responds to proximity and caress with movement and sound. The effect is sensual, disturbing, highly charged and openly affective. The intent of the work is to create a relationship between participant and technology that invokes a space of experience, reflection and vulnerability, a delicate balance that attempts to incite an awareness of one's relationship with oneself through the act of touch (Schiphorst:2007).⁷⁵

The technology in *Bodymaps* is a tool to enable us to re-examine and reflect on our relationship with the digital image at the touch of the interface that reflects back at us as – the ‘Looking glass self. One explanation for the impact this work has on participants could be explained through an embodiment with the image; which may be disturbing and uncanny.

The uncanny is something Japanese roboticist Mashiro Mori relates to in his thesis on the Uncanny Valley. He claims the closer a robot resembles a human being, the more affection or feeling of familiarity it can engender. However the imitation of human exteriors, may lead to unexpected effects and unpleasant surprises (Mori cited in Reichardt 1978).⁷⁶

These ideas also resonate with the work of Japanese artist Hachiya Kazuhiko in the work *Inter Dis-Communication* (1993) exhibited as part of the *Prix Selection* exhibition at Eyebeam Atelier.⁷⁷ The work involved two people wearing head-mounted displays, the 'machine' projects one wearer's sight and sound perception of the environment into the other one's display, thus confusing the borders between the identities of 'you' and 'me'. The Inter Dis-Communication Machine allows its wearers to 'enter' each other's body and perception without being able to influence it. The work composed of a video camera, transmitters, head mounted displays, batteries, and feathers as a communication system aimed at transmitting and receiving sensual experiences.

If we look at how artists have been using the tools of technology we can come to understand the way we interact with it and how it has become a part of the 'Looking glass self'. In other words, according to Cooley's looking Glass Self, it is the way we interact with other subjects through the technology that shapes our perception of self – through the other. The tools of emerging technologies are enabling us to narrow the gap between the self/other threshold where we may be able to share our inter-subjectivities and experience more of the self in the other.

The desire to reproduce ourselves creatively has never been more prevalent than in Hiroshi Ishiguro's *Geminoid HI-1*. Ishiguro a professor at the University of Osaka has reproduced a replica of himself through robotics. Ishiguro presented his *Geminoid HI-1* as part of the Human nature exhibition⁷⁸ at ARS Electronica Linz 2009. Ishiguro made a cloned robot of himself that combined both the cognitive and functional remote controlled programming of movements to focus on 'human presence'. Participants sat around a table and were invited to ask the robot questions and engage in dialogue with the Geminoid. Hiroshi himself was controlling the Geminoid

in a remote space watching the participants on video. Hiroshi spoke through the Geminoid as a vessel, similar to *Wearings 2 INTO 1*. Those who were taking part in the dialogue expressed how 'weird' and 'uncanny' this experience felt. Most of the participants went up to the Geminoid and touched its face to confirm its reality.

Though these artists have been concerned with bridging the gap between art and artist, artwork and viewer, through video art, media art and performance practice. The unique focus of this research is the live interactive element of the material body with its real-time digital other and the impact this interaction has on shaping our perception of self. Though Sermon's later work on telepresence is concerned with blurring the boundaries between online and offline identities this research is looking for a meeting place between the corporeal self and digital other as way to embody the digital other as a component of self. This may be achieved through stretching the materiality of the body through the phenomenological experience in real-time digital video performance.

In order to explore this gap in knowledge through digital performance practice a return to Lacan's MS is a way to seek ways of understanding the relationship between the actual self and the digital other. If the practice can evidence a meeting place between self and other where we can experience these binary oppositions simultaneously then the digital other may indeed be more a part of us than we realise.

1:4 A Return to The Mirror Stage

Performing with one's digital counterpart can explain the way the image of the self is reflected within the other creating an overlap between the physical body and the imaginary 'I' of the subject. By returning to the MS it not only gives us an insight into

the construction of the subject it enables a questioning of the reality of the digital other, as a real or imaginary experience, and its relationship to the self.

Lacan's MS was influenced by the French sociologist Roger Caillois' work on mimicry. In *Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia*, (1984) ⁷⁹Caillois suggested that insects assuming the appearance of their environment are in fact assimilating themselves into that environment. They are captivated by the very space that surrounds them and seek to lose themselves within that space; to break down the distinction between organism and environment. Lacan took this idea into his MS where he observes how the fascination with, and capturing of, qualities of the image shape ourselves according to that image and the constructed nature of the self. For Caillois there is no distinction between these insects and the environment; they have become space. As a result he regards human personality disorders as a disturbance between personality and space. This is where they enter into the psychology of psychasthenia and there is no distinction between self and other (Caillois 1984, p.28).⁸⁰ For Lacan, however, though the infant is captivated by its own image, the subject is not lost to the specular image, the other. Lacan regards:

*... the function of the mirror-stage as a particular case of the function of the imago, which is to establish a relation between the organism and its reality" (Lacan 1977, p.4).*⁸¹

The child becomes enmeshed in a confused state of recognition/misrecognition. This is an imagined structure of identification/the ego where the infant does not lose itself in the image of itself. The child is captured between the image and its actual self. Paradoxically it is the specular image of wholeness which threatens the infant with fragmentation. The only way to resolve this problem is for the infant/subject to

identify with the image and it is this identification (or misrecognition) with its virtual counterpart that forms the ego. By alluding to the notion that the specular image is her/his own eradicates the fear of fragmentation, and at the same time the subject has entered the imaginary domain. This is understood as the child's first step towards individuation⁸² and marks the child's entry into Lacan's 'imaginary order' that is the order of images, reflections and doubles (Willerslev 2007, p.66).⁸³ What is important here is an understanding of Lacan's imaginary as:

... a mode of being in which no absolute distinction between subject and object is apparent; the self identifies with the world, feeling at once within and apart from it, so that the two glide ceaselessly in and out of each other in a sealed circuit (2007, p.25).⁸⁴

This reference to Lacan is exemplified by Willerslev when the Yukaghirs go hunting for elk and they re-enter the imaginary order when they mimic and perform the elk. This form of mimesis enables them to suspend any division between themselves and their prey. While considering the Yukaghirs' way of hunting digital performance may provide a potential framework for subjects to immerse themselves within the digital other using mimicry as a way to suspend divisions between self and digital other.

When we return to the MS as a process Willerslev explains how as adults we still try to have mastery over our bodies. The infant in Lacan's MS has an imaginary sense of mastery over its own body by anticipating a degree of muscular co-ordination which he has not yet actually achieved. As adults once the imaginary MS has passed we still don't have mastery over it. When our bodies are healthy we cannot control the body flinching, feeling love or anger etc. In this sense Willerslev asserts that our bodies invite objectification where they are not just seen as part of us but also as other:

...the self cannot be understood as a bounded and unitary entity because it is developed and constituted only in and through a rivalry with otherness – a rivalry that in fact is never reconciled but continues to trouble us through our lives...Our body therefore is not wholly and utterly our own, and we will never totally dominate or subjugate it to our own ends, just as we will never be able entirely to shake off the dominant role that others play in its constitution (Willerslev 2007, p.72).⁸⁵

By drawing on the MS what can we learn about the self when we interact with the digital other? This is a fundamental question forming the basis of the thesis. Our perception of what self is has primarily been based on our interactions with others. So therefore it seems a logical progression to question our relationship with our live digital counterpart. Is the video image an illusion or a reality of the self? Is it other? Is it real or imagined? In using real-time digital technologies can we come to understand the impact these interactions have on our reality and our place within it? Can we transport ourselves perceptually through the technology to observe ourselves from many perspectives? These questions may be answered through the art practice to determine what these interactions may reveal about our own embodiment with others and the world. Can we experience more of the self, enabled through the digital technology that we have not encountered before? In order to understand the impact that the digital other may have on the subject the thesis revisits what is understood by Lacan's real as a way to make more sense of the subject and its perception of reality. Furthermore by assimilating ourselves within the video image, we don't lose the self and find ourselves in a state of psychasthenia; instead, we may know more about what constitutes the self and our relationship with the digital counterpart.

1:5 Re-visiting the real

In Lacan's MS we lose the 'real' where we are looking for a sense of self in the other. Perhaps by being immersed within the digital other through interactive video performance we may be able to experience the real. It has been through the experience of Virtual Reality that the Lacanian perception of the body as external object and attached subject at the same time is magnified in the cyberspace experience of Karen Frank. She calls this a partial 'split physiology' where we experience the 'other' space with bits of our bodies without losing the whole body. She emphasizes the way VR reinforces the established social boundaries of 'me and not-me'. She describes it as a space that protects us to experience more of the 'not-me' that enables the real self to understand more of the other ⁸⁶(Frank 1995). We can see from Frank's account the way VR disrupts the proprioception of the body when it perceptually shifts from one place to another without losing its place of standing. Therefore it may be that this displacement is experienced as a re-appearing part of our corporality. Furthermore it may be via the technology we access something of the lost 'real' through the other.

For Lacan our world is like a stage or a stadium where the language of signifiers can only re[present] the world as we know it, where we have no access to the real. The power of language to veil the real is expressed by Belsey when she declares that:

Language, in consequence, is not to be trusted'. The signifier seems to evoke the existence of something on the other side of it, but refuses to tell us what this is...there is no access to this place 'behind' the words...The signifier...appears as a veil, but one that veils the unknown, perhaps nothing, a possible absence, the potential absence, even of the subject itself (Belsey 2005, p. 41-42).⁸⁷

The Real according to Lacan refers to authenticity – an absolute truth as opposed to a reality based on sense perception and materiality. Contemporary theorist Slavoj Žižek, influenced by Lacan, relates to the real within fiction and supposes that fiction replaces the Real. Žižek's version of the Real (with a capital) within contemporary culture refers to a *reality* we experience as *really real* (my italics) when 'we should not mistake reality for fiction' (Žižek 2002, p.19).⁸⁸ The world we live in according to Žižek is fake and the Real we think we experience is replaced by fiction. In other words it is through fiction we can unveil the Real which is hidden. Therefore Žižek's Real can be accessed through fiction/fantasy and for Lacan the real is inaccessible where we can only access the world through signifiers. Though accessing the Lacanian real would be a traumatic encounter for Žižek, the trauma of Lacan's Real⁸⁹ can be sustained if we fictionalize it so we can avoid the trauma of the Real. Žižek articulates the trauma of the Real as a manifestation, an unreal apparition where fantasy replaces the Real. To understand the relevance of the real to this research we must look towards our direct experience of immersion within the digital counterpart. For instance if we experience the immersion as *really real* where we have understood the fiction of the image as a reality, it follows that the fictional image folds back into and changes our reality.

The question raised now is when one performs with their digital counterpart is the image a fantasy replacing the Real? Or can it serve as a way to experience the real accessed through the other? These are important considerations when taking into account the impact the lived experience of this interaction has on the physical body and one's perception of self. For Lacan we know the real exists because the symptom of its absence is trauma – a missed encounter with the real. We experience its absence through our symptomatic need to repeat. Using repetition as

a metaphor Lacan sees this as a missed encounter with the real. Moreover for Žižek trauma is said to be veiled by fantasy to protect us from the Real. The only way to understand the connection between the Lacanian real, Žižek's Real and digital performance is through direct experience. Whether we can access the Real through the fantasy of the digital image understood as *really real* or through some primordial Lacanian experience we may be able to discover something more of the self in the digital other. In other words there may be an unconscious connection with the loss of the real in the self, which we are able to access in the other. Rather than dividing the subject from the world and itself we may be able to look towards experience transposed through the technologies to overcome any boundary between the actual self and digital counterpart. Above all the performative quality of self as 'me' and the other as 'not-me' may well be caught up in both the familiar and unfamiliar interactions with one's digital counterpart. It may also be likely that these ideas resonate with Freud's work on *The Uncanny* (1914) which brings into question how the uncanny experience may have a link with Lacan's lost real.

Freud declares that the uncanny is "that species of the frightening that goes back to what was once well known and had long been familiar" (Freud cited in Phillips: 2003:124)⁹⁰. In his essay he refers to an animistic phase in our early development that has been left behind in us. It is these traces of early development that Freud associates with the uncanny. He states:

It appears that we have all, in the course of our individual development, been through a phase corresponding to the animistic phase in the development of primitive peoples, that this phase did not pass without leaving behind in us residual traces that can still make themselves felt, and that everything we now find 'uncanny' meets the

criterion that it is linked with these remnants of animistic mental activity and prompts them to express themselves (Freud cited in Phillips 2003, p.147).⁹¹

By drawing on the uncanny these traces may be understood as a residue of the real. Consequently it may be speculated that Lacan's lost real re-emerges as an uncanny experience. Indeed there could be a connection between the uncanny and a primordial part of self. For that reason could not Freud's uncanny be a remnant of the real? Do we experience a missed encounter with the real by reproducing ourselves as image and by mimetically incorporating the digital other as part of self? Are they symptoms of the real? Moreover is the desire to reproduce ourselves as image and/or repeat the actions of others such an instinctive process, where we have a need to discover a sense of self in the other? These notions are a part of our everyday occurrences where we catch ourselves mimicking others as a way to empathize and become a part of the other. Or indeed, when we copy idiosyncratic movements are we caught up in the other? These are methods we use to feel connected and/or closer to others. These ideas have some correlation with the work of the neuroscientists on their work on mirror neurons. In his book *Mirroring People: The science of Empathy and How We Connect with Others* (2008)⁹² Marco Iacoboni explains how our minds share actions, emotions and experiences of others. We do this by imitating each other on a neurological level where our brains respond to others as if they were doing those actions themselves. According to Iacoboni these mirror neurons are important for action understanding were they allow an understanding from within. Likewise the Italian neurophysiologist Giacomo Rizzolatti, professor at the University of Parma in Italy holds a similar viewpoint. In the *Annual Review of Neuroscience* both Laila Craighero and Rizzolatti presented their research findings on *The Mirror - Neuron System* (2004, p. 169-192). They claim that the

mirror neuron mechanism appears to play a fundamental role in both action understanding and imitation. Unlike most species, we are able to learn by imitation and this faculty is at the basis of human culture. (Rizzolati & Craighero 2004, p.169)⁹³ The most controversial neuroscientist Vilayanur Ramachandran in his book *The Tell-Tale Brain* (2011)⁹⁴ argues that mirror neurons underlie empathy and have accelerated the evolution of the brain. The very existence of mirror neurons in the human brain is disputed by some. Christian Jarrett, editor of the *British Psychological Society's Research Digest* blog and staff writer on their magazine *The Psychologist* presents a more tenuous view of the mirror neuron phenomena. In his blog article *Mirror neurons: The Most Hyped Concept in Neuroscience?* (2012) Jarrett states that “ The biggest and most obvious problem for anyone advocating the idea that mirror neurons play a central role in our ability to understand other people’s actions, is that we are quite clearly capable of understanding actions that we are unable to perform” (Jarrett 2012).⁹⁵

Though mirror neurons are a contested field within neuroscience and current research is still trying to find out what they are. I am speculating that If we can simulate each other’s actions and emotions through our mirror neurons then it may be through the mimicry we can feel immersed were we feel we can embody the other. Pushing these ideas even further it might be the mirror neurons are caught up in repetitive movement and immersion which might contribute to an uncanny experience which could be a move towards experiencing the lost real. If Freud’s notion of the Uncanny is based on our inner compulsion to repeat causing us to unintentionally return to the same place, could this unintentional return to something once familiar be a return to the real? Maybe this is where we access a primordial stage of our human development long forgotten accessed through the digital other.

It could be suggested therefore that the desire to reproduce ourselves as a real-time video image is based on an intrinsic attempt to grasp something of the real through the other. I am defining the lost real as the leftover of some primordial phase of human development encountered through the uncanny experience. When we perform with a digital counterpart the uncanny experience may enable the subject to re-discover a lost part of self in the other. This might be understood as a return 'home' encountered through the video technology. Freud articulates the uncanny is coming from the German *das Unheimliche*, translated as 'the unhomely' and its opposite *das Heimliche*, 'the homely' (Freud 1919 cited in Phillips 2003, p.134).⁹⁶ The ambivalence between these terms makes it difficult to define the uncanny experience. It is so much embroiled between the binary oppositions such as the familiar/unfamiliar, known/unknown and animate/inanimate, that as a form of experience we find it impossible to describe. We can relate to the feeling of home and not-home if we imagine ourselves returning home and discovering we have been burgled. Though it is our familiar home it also feels strange and oddly unfamiliar. Conversely when we encounter these strange feelings within other contexts we find it so difficult to articulate. Applying these ideas to the relationship between actual body and the digital counterpart may bring us closer to understand more about the self. The interaction between the actual body and the digital other may induce the feeling of the uncanny when our boundaries between the real and the virtual are blurred. This blurring of boundaries is encountered through the image of the mobius strip at the intersection where the inside and outside are continuous. According to Freud: "...an uncanny effect often arises when the boundary between fantasy and reality is blurred, when we are faced with the reality of something that we have until now

considered imaginary, when a symbol takes on the full function and significance of what it symbolizes, and so forth” (Freud cited in Phillips 2003, p.150)⁹⁷.

Though Freud is specifically relating to magical practices we can relate to the idea of the inanimate object coming alive within certain genres of cinema, for example, in horror and/or fantasy where the dead come alive in the vampire/zombie movies. The notion of the dead coming alive is a typical example of the uncanny. However if the fine line between fantasy and reality is blurred for audiences then what impact does this have on us when we are faced with the blurred boundary between the actual body and the digital body in digital performance? It is this uncertainty between the real and the imaginary where I draw a comparison with Lacan's real in which the imaginary is the veil of the real. I am suggesting that the uncanny experience, which we find difficult to articulate in words, might actually be a way forward to access the real – behind the veil of signification. For Lacan all symbolization veils the real. When Frank (1995) described her cyber experience as a ‘me-not-me’⁹⁸ phenomenon, the boundary between the actual and the virtual may well be understood as an encounter with the lost real. From Frank's account of her cyber experience the confusion between the actual and the virtual has enabled her to experience more of her body in cyberspace through a disruption in the proprioception of the body. In using real-time video technologies we may be able to reach a part of the self that has remained hidden and unfamiliar rekindled through the digital circuitry of the physical body and the digital other.

1:6 Embracing the other

The main focus of this research is to ascertain whether through digital performance the digital other is a part of self or not. In doing so what can we learn from this interaction? Is a return to the MS an attempt to satisfy our desiring selves – always

looking for our lack of wholeness in the 'other'? Likewise are we searching for an aspect of the lost real in the other? Can interaction with the digital other unite us with a lost part of the self and is this part of us lost through language?

In pursuing this research the digital video image makes it possible to experience the digital other as different, and also, as if it were not wholly other to us. As this research progresses these investigations may indicate a strong connection to the video image experienced as part of the self that is unfamiliar. Perhaps new technologies can alter our perception of the fact of otherness in relation to the self within the context of the video performance. Though the other is outside of self we can embrace our relationship with otherness in a number of ways. For example when we interact with objects and artefacts they have an impact on us, where we are not unresponsive objects we are reactive. If we react to others and/or things then we feel a connection to them. Similarly when there is an emotional dynamic between subjects and objects, self and other, sensations and emotions are not experienced with detachment or indifference. These connections are likely to contribute to a composite self made up of many components outside of the self. If we apply this reasoning to our interactions with the digital other there is all the more likelihood that through digital performance we may be able to experience a seamless connection with the digital other to overcome the boundaries between them.

In learning new ways of interacting with our own image and that of others we can come to take on board these unfamiliar behaviours and perhaps experience them as part of self. If the human body is a creature of habit where it learns skills through example then eventually it becomes part of one's corporeality. If the body inhabits the world through repetition and structure; when these daily rituals are broken or disturbed the body is more aware of its corporeality (Leder 1990).⁹⁹

If we can disturb the bodies rituals through digital performance then we become more self aware of the body and our connection with the image. However, it is also true to say it is habit forming not to be aware, and exist in space where we believe we are separate from ourselves and the world of others. Following this line of thinking it is speculated that by scrutinizing our perception of self within our social symbolic world, and raising some doubt and scepticism of what constitutes the self, can help us to re-examine the way in which it is constructed. To question the certainty/uncertainty of the self during digital performance causes us to re-assess our prior knowledge and understanding of what self is.

Lacan's MS has been explored specifically to explain the way in which the infant enters the MS and emerges as a split subject, which has been constituted through language. Explaining the self/other positions within Lacan's MS has enabled this research to consider the digital other from different viewpoints during the intersection of the actual and the digital within digital performance. This entwinement has been articulated as the virtual image reflecting back and impacting on ones perception of the self. Indeed, so too has Lacan's impossible real been linked with Freud's uncanny to explain the uncanny experience as a potential remnant of the real.

The theoretical positions of Lacan, Merleau-Ponty, Leder and Willerslev have all maintained an alternative view to the self/other duality where the body can experience itself as both a subject and an object. We have seen in Lacan's MS the way in which the infant experiences the paradox of the self/other dichotomy. In accordance to Merleau-Ponty and Willerslev we can observe and experience through self-reflexive means the viewpoint from both self/other positions. For Willerslev we can perform the other through mimesis by hunting rituals. As for Merleau-Ponty we can see and be seen through the other. According to Leder we

can experience the body as both a subject and an object through being immersed in purposeful activities and through the body in pain where we become aware of the body part as an object. These positions demonstrate the way the self and other interrelate and interconnect particularly through Merleau-Ponty's chiasm where self and world is enmeshed in each other.

The self has been articulated through Cooley's looking glass theory where he views the self being constructed by the way we feel others see us. As for Mead, his interpretation of the self can only be developed if we can get outside ourselves in the form of self-awareness. It is most certainly the cognitive and emotional elements which are important contributions to how one views the self. But it is through the proprioception of the body that may enable the body to perceptually shift from its place of standing and reflect on itself.

Chapter Two

Performing a Phenomenology: A Qualitative practice-led study

This chapter is concerned with implementing a qualitative practice-led study in the form of four Inter-Reactive Video Explorations I-REs. The study encompasses a crossover between the theory and the practice by drawing on Merleau-Ponty's work the *chiasm* discussed in chapter one. The crossing over of the theory and the practice is located at the intersection of the moebius strip – a metaphor to illustrate the encapsulation of the practice as the method to challenge the self/other binary divisions. Likewise this symbol will provide a framework through which one can interpret the I-REs through the subjective experiences of me and the informants. The collection and gathering of all information are articulated as 'responsive field notes'. The term connotes the gathering of information under an umbrella of subjective shared experiences and reactions which have not been designed under controlled conditions, but deliberate ad hoc responses and instant reactions. All the findings from these I-REs are to be discussed in chapter three.

The study uses a mixed-method framework originating from phenomenology and auto-ethnography. The intersections of these methods I have coined 'auto-ethnophenomenology'.¹⁰⁰ The chapter describes this method through an introduction into both auto-ethnography and phenomenological principles which have been drawn on in order to answer the main research question. The art practice is introduced in the form of the four I-REs aligned with four key questions.

The Method

2:1 Auto-ethnophenomenology

The term 'Auto-ethnophenomenology' is a mixed-method approach using ethnography and phenomenology to undertake this qualitative practice-led study. The framework for this method has arisen out of the importance of subjective lived experiences and the ability to shift from the position of the 'I' to the other – from first person to third person observations and reflections. Together these components have enabled the study to validate the 'subjective' as both a self-reflexive and 'self-objective' experience. In wanting to know more of my 'self' through a video representation the first I-RE incorporated an account of my lived experiences as autobiographical texts articulating my experiences from both self/other perspectives. Though the problem of self-reflection may be hermetic it has been through describing my interactions from a third person viewpoint which has enabled me to turn away from myself in order to then turn inward on myself from a first person position.

I-RE ii-iv focuses on informants lived experiences as a way to understand their phenomenological interactions between their actual body and the digital other. The first heading 'Positioning the 'I' through Auto-ethnographic digital performance' articulates what auto-ethnography is and how it contributes to this study. The second heading 'A phenomenology of digital performance' explains why and how phenomenology is pertinent to this research. Together these methods are what have contributed to the 'auto-ethnophenomenological' framework.

2:2 Positioning the 'I' through Auto-ethnographic digital Performance

Approaching this study as both a researcher and an informant enabled me to be aware of the impact these IR-Es may have on my own perception of self. Furthermore I was able to focus my attentions within a self-reflexive framework reflecting from the inside as an emotive subject and looking outside as a researcher. This view is shared by Ellis when she questions the role of the 'I' within ethnographic research.

Is the 'I' only about the eye of the researcher, the researcher standing apart and looking? What about the 'I' of the researcher, the part that not only looks but is looked back at, that not only acts but is acted back upon by those in her focus. Is ethnography only about the other? Isn't ethnography also relational, about the other and the 'I' of the researcher in interaction? Might the researcher also be a subject? Might the 'I' refer to the researcher who looks inward as well as outward? What can be gained from making the 'I' a part, or even a focus, of ethnographic research? (Ellis 2004, p.XIX).¹⁰¹

In positioning myself within this practice-led study I formulated a series of personal video diaries which captured my experience. Ellis defines autobiographical introspections as "...research, writing, story, and method that connect the autobiographical and personal to the cultural, social, and political. Autoethnographic forms feature concrete action, emotion, embodiment, self-consciousness, and introspection portrayed in dialogue, scenes, characterization, and plot. Thus, autoethnography claims the conventions of literary writing..." (Ellis, 2004, p.xix).¹⁰²

By modelling the first part of this research on an auto-ethnographic framework I addressed some of my interactions in I-RE(i) from a first person perspective

documenting and tracking my sensations and perceptions. Later I re-visited these texts to formulate and analyse a collection of experiences.

Through introspection auto-ethnography is a way to relay the sensory nature of my lived experience, from both first and third person perspectives. It is also for this reason that auto-ethnography has become a most appropriate approach to this research where my personal experience is both reflexive and participatory. It is through the autobiographical that the first I-RE can interconnect the personal, and social introspection portrayed in the video diaries and texts. This method reflects on my interactions between me in the art practice, and standing outside it as other. To be consciously aware of these shifting movements within the I-RE is understood as a way of bridging any divisions between them. During and after the studio performances in I-RE(i) I participated in different kinds of writing which deepened my experiential, interpretive and theoretical relationship with the performances. The first were studio diaries tracking my sensations, perceptions and stream of consciousness. Secondly I wrote lived reflections of the performances from embodied memory and thirdly I re-visited my documentations of the I-RE and my video recorded reflections for theoretical analysis. It was through these methods that I could evaluate my personal responses to the interactions and the impact my cultural background had on my social interaction with the video image and the impact this had on my perception of self.

Garance Marechal, a researcher of ethnography at Liverpool University wrote that autoethnography has been criticised by analytic proponents for being 'too personal' ... 'biased' ... 'naval gazing' and 'self-absorbed'. (Marechal, 2010, pp. 43-45).¹⁰³ This criticism is assuming that if one gets close to the object of the research or is in fact the object of the research that there is no relational commitment to the project

creating new encounters between the interaction of the material body and the digital other as a valid form of social criticism. Self-participation incorporated into this research method is specific to the self as autonomous subject where myself as the researcher is the object of my enquiry and also other as autonomous self.

For Carolyn Ellis ethnography focuses on the relational aspect between the ethnographer and her/his subjects locating the researcher between the 'I' and the 'other'. Knowledge production through the interplay of inter-subjectivities observed by, or participated in, has been well documented through the writings of ethnographer Sarah Pink, in her book *Doing Visual Ethnography* (2007). Pink defines ethnography in the following way:

*...ethnography is a process of creating and representing knowledge (about society, culture and individuals) that is based on ethnographers' own experiences. It does not claim to produce an objective or truthful account of reality, but should aim to offer versions of ethnographers' experiences of reality that are as loyal as possible to the context, negotiations and intersubjectivities through which the knowledge was produced (Pink 2007, p.22).*¹⁰⁴

Pink's emphasis on the mutual exchange of experiences between subjects is an important reflexive subjective approach within ethnography and she challenges some of the assumptions associated with reflexivity such as:

*...the assumption that a reflexive approach will aid ethnographers to produce objective data represents only a token and cosmetic engagement with reflexivity that wrongly supposes subjectivity could (or should) be avoided or eradicated. Instead, subjectivity should be engaged with as a central aspect of ethnographic knowledge, interpretation and representation (2007, p.23).*¹⁰⁵

2:3 A phenomenology of digital performance

The lived experience was the driving force of this practice-led research. This is due to the phenomenological study of a subjects' lived conscious experience and the philosophical phenomenon of perception, which led the work in the direction of self-reflexive research. Although phenomenology can never truly capture the experience of others it is through introspection and self-reflection that one can come to understand the lived experience of others, and one's perception of self through a shared exchange of knowledge within digital video performance.

In attempting to understand the experience of others this research tried to connect with the digital other, and to provide new frameworks of experiences which could not be articulated through language; it is through our ability to empathize with others that we can come to recognize their feelings and make sense of them as our own. This is most clearly demonstrated by the philosopher Thomas Nagel in his paper 'What is it Like to Be a Bat' (1974).¹⁰⁶ Nagel took into account the importance of subjective experience and the valid results that can be achieved in reflecting on experience. He accepted the existence of something that cannot be expressed in language and proposed that we can come to understand the experiences of others only by having similar experiences ourselves and:

...to deny the reality or logical significance of what we can never describe or understand is the crudest form of cognitive dissonance... Reflection on what it is like to be a bat seems to lead us, therefore, to the conclusion that there are facts that do not consist in the truth of propositions expressible in a human language. We can be compelled to recognize the existence of such facts without being able to state or comprehend them... Whatever may be the status of facts about what it is like to be a

human being, or a bat, or a Martian, these appear to be facts that embody a particular point of view (Nagel 1974).¹⁰⁷

Understanding and interpreting the experience of others comes from Nagel's 'point of view' with empathy from the perspective of the other, along with Susan Kozel's interpretation of heterophenomenology which has informed this practice-led research. Though hetero relates to difference and phenomenology 'preserves subjective experience' (Kozel 2007, p.56)¹⁰⁸ the heterophenomenologist for Kozel relies upon shared experience, or some degree of empathy.¹⁰⁹ The sharing of experience becomes possible between the researcher and the researched where they meet on familiar ground where the intention of the researcher is not that of a neutral observer. Heterophenomenology is dependant on the way the researcher is inserted into the network of social interaction and alongside the content they reveal. It is through digital performance that informants can share similar experiences as co-subjects and self-objects. An understanding of the way the intersubjectivities of subjects has contributed to a morphing of experience is important to this research. It is this reversibility which can help form a point of view from the other person's perspective. Phenomenology is articulated by Merleau-Ponty as a way of reflecting on lived experience, that is the invisibility of human experience. His goal is not to make the invisible visible because he supposes that if 'being' is hidden then it is a fundamental characteristic of being. In other words phenomenology's invisibility is only visible through its absence. It is this imperceptibility of human experience that is at the core of this research where things pass into us and we pass into things (Merleau-Ponty 1968, p.133).¹¹⁰ The permeability between the digital image and the corporeal body can be understood by reworking the relationship between bodies and media technology and revoke the suggestion that the digital image 'is merely a visual

representation of the world' (Kozel, 2007, p.36).¹¹¹ If technology can enable us to go beyond a mere representation of the world then in attempting to do a phenomenology of another person's experience Kozel proposes how a phenomenological philosophy provides the conceptual framework for interpreting the experiences of others.

*The act of doing a phenomenology of another person's experience is both disturbing and intriguing...it is further disturbing because we wonder of the agency or the voice of the others: are they silenced? Are they well represented? How can we know? It is intriguing because it amounts to a slice of shared knowledge, a morph of the lived experience of two people because the originator of the experience is trans-substantiated through the one who produces the phenomenological document, the experience thus becomes filtered through two bodies (Kozel, 2007, p.58-59).*¹¹²

In an attempt to perform the phenomenology of another, this qualitative research sought ways to understand the impact the digital other has on one's perception of self within digital performance. Both phenomenology and auto-ethnography are fitting approaches to explore the impact the digital other has on the perception of self through the lived experience. The culmination of these methods enabled auto-ethnophenomenology to reverse both positions of the 'I' and the 'other' through self-reflection and self-objectification. As the researcher being engaged in both self-participation and observation enabled the experiential to make sense of the lived experience of others. This in turn enabled me and informants to share experience through writing, observing and interacting. Equally through the mutual exchange of experience we can have an empathy and understanding of the interactions between the corporeal body and its digital counterpart.

2:4 The Art Practice

This section introduces four sets of inter-reactive live experiments I-REs which were conducted from (2010-2011) and each one informed the next one over a one year period. The explorations were entitled 'inter-reactive' as a way to explore the impact these explorations had on the lived experience of informants. This research looked to the reactions these explorations had on informants as a means of capturing experience in the moment and as real as possible. Each I-RE consisted of a key question as way to unpack the overall research question outlined below.

Main Research Question

How might the lived experience of digital performance enable the subject to step into the digital 'other' to understand more about the self through the phenomenology of the digital other?

2:4.1 Key Questions

I-RE (i) Using video projection technologies can we unite with the digital video image as other and become one?

The rationale for this question explored whether we have the potential to experience stepping outside our physical body and of stepping into a digital counterpart when engaged in digital performance. This involved the following concerns:

- Does one-to-one intimate interaction bring us closer to the digital other?
- Can interacting with our video projection enable us to become immersed within the video image?

Key Question

I-RE (ii) Does the digital other have an emotional impact on the self? Can we challenge the impact emotional responses may have on the alienation between self and digital other?

This question explored the potential that human emotion has on the notion of the image as digital other. This was approached in the following way:

- Through observation and recording of emotional responses of participant's interaction with their image in order to identify a connection rather than a division, between participant and image.
- There was a development in the technology to real-time video (Isadora) which enabled informants to step into their image in a public venue.

Key Question

I-RE (iii) Do we alternate between the physical self and the digital non-self to get to know more of the self; and is this oscillation an uncanny experience?

This question explored the paradox of perceptually shifting from the actual into the digital through video technology and the impact this may have on lived experience.

This was explored in the following way:

- By developing the real-time capabilities of the technology informants could encounter their real-time video image and a pre-recorded video image at the same time.
- By creating a composite image in real-time it may happen that the informant could feel an oscillation between moving in and out of the image as a uncanny experience.

Key Question

I-RE (iv) Can new technological affordances now allow us to embody the self of another?

This question explored the potential to immerse ourselves in the body of another and merge selves. This was approached in the following way:

- Creating a one-to-one performance between two subjects.
- Through the development of a new technology using head Mounted Display Systems and the real-time video programme *Isadora*; could we suspend a division between subjects where they felt they were immersed in each other?
- What impact would this have on our perception of self?

The following key elements are what shaped the framework for each I-RE. This included strategies to understand the *why* of human behaviour and to make rational reasons why informants responded to the I-REs in the manner in which they did. This included the gathering of a variety of responsive field notes to be interpreted and analyzed. Those that took part in these I-REs included myself and members of the public at *The Mander Shopping Centre* in Wolverhampton who were also invited to another venue at *Eagleworks* studios in Wolverhampton and at *The Public* in West Bromwich. These elements have been placed under the umbrella of research, which includes the experiential through sensations and perceptions in the moment, lived reflections from embodied memories of self-reflection and reflection on reflection. These components are outlined as follows:

- Research: involved gathering knowledge by ‘doing’ and incorporated active involvement in the I-REs. Both myself and the informants were involved in the research by interacting/performing with their own digital ‘other’. Informal discussions were encouraged to discuss informants’ experiences in a non-

formal setting. These methods assisted the researcher and informants to share experiences to enable the narrative to evolve through collaboration as a form of knowledge production.

- Self-participation and Self-Reflection: this is based on writing and recording my experiences within the I-REs. This involved different kinds of writing and recording to expand on the experiential interpretive and theoretical relationship with these interactions. The studio diaries tracked my feelings and perceptions in the moment in the form of text and video dialogue. Later my writing and recordings of lived reflections of those interactions were from embodied memory and then re-visiting the text and video to interpret and analyse these interactions. Self-reflection does not just rely on the memory of an experience but it is seen as a form of experience.
- Informants' experiences in the moment and self-reflection.: A variety of techniques were used to gather informants' experiences. This involved recording their immediate reactions on video. Secondly feedback forms were also implemented as a form of reflection. Thirdly informants were invited back to the venue to discuss their experience.
- Reflection of Reflection: this form of self-reflection was established through re-visiting my own responses on audio and video and re-evaluating and documenting my experience. In one particular I-RE informants were re-called back for interview to review their first initial experiences. These reflexive interviews were a means to compare their first initial experience with a preconceived encounter of the same interaction.

Each of these I-REs encompasses fieldnotes which documents the latter. The following evaluative techniques will be used to analyse the practice through the fieldnotes. These are taken from Laurel Richardson *Evaluating ethnography: Qualitative Inquiry* (Richardson 2000, p.15-16)¹¹³. These include considering the substantive contribution – how does the research contribute to our understanding of life? Also the aesthetic merit – is it artistically shaped? The reflexivity of how the researcher has been both a producer and a product of this research? Subsequently what impact does this have on emotion and/or intellect and does it generate new questions? Lastly does it express a reality – a fleshed out sense of lived experience? These questions will be informing the fieldnotes and analysis discussed in chapter three.

2:5 The Inter-Reactive Explorations I-REs

Each I-RE was implemented to challenge each of the key questions (i, ii, iii, iv) where each I-RE informed and shaped the next one. This sequence was maintained throughout this study with the outcomes of one I-RE impacting on the preceding one. All four I-REs are divided into the following categories:

- I-RE I explores the relationship between me and my digital other (6 studio projects)
- I-RE II explores the relationship between informants and their digital other
- I-RE III explores the relationship between my pre-recorded digital other and informants
- I-RE IV explores the relationship between two actual subjects/informants and their digital counterparts

2.5.1: Inter-Reactive Exploration I



Fig.1. L Moore: Studio project (iii) 2010 (DVD Appendix 4: I-RE-I)

Title: Me & My Digital other

Location: University of Wolverhampton, 6 Studio works

Key Question

Using video projection technologies can we unite with the digital video image as other and become one?

Statement

I-RE I was divided into six small studio projects i-vi where I performed with my digital counterpart in the form of a self-projected video representation. This I-RE had largely been informed by the writings of Jacques Lacan and his work on the Mirror Stage.¹¹⁴ The aim was to challenge Lacan's self/other dichotomy by attempting to find a 'oneness' between the 'actual' body and its digital counterpart. Rather than viewing the specular image as a split entity, as other, the focus was to unite 'self' and 'other' so there would be no division between them.

Description

In I-RE(i) I engaged in several different kinds of writing which deepened my experiential and interpretive relationship with the work.

- a) First I write during my studio sessions engaging in auto-ethnophenomenology. This involved experiential writing sensing motion and tracking my sensations, perceptions and consciousness.
- b) Secondly I did both audio and visual recordings of my lived reflections of the performances from embodied memory and experience.
- c) Thirdly I wrote a critique of these reflections and observations in the fieldnotes.

These methods enabled me to shift from 'I' to 'other' as a means of turning away from myself in order to look inward. I did a series of six consecutive studio projects that incorporated a video recording of my full body image where I performed with my projected video representation. These are described as projects (i-vi). For each one I had a pre-recorded video image of me projected onto the studio wall. My projected image was at the same height and width of my actual body where I recorded my interactions with my digital counterpart using a video camera. These performative experiences were recorded on video, and compiled into written texts as part of my field notes. Both the audio-visual and written documentation became both personal and reflexive accounts of my experiences. These self-reflections took place immediately after each studio project, while both the audio and visual lived reflections from embodied memory were recorded some time later which can be accessed in appendix 1 (pp.158-175) & appendix 4 DVD. From hereon I describe the

corporeal body as the 'actual' body and the digital other as 'digital counterpart' to avoid confusion and to maintain continuity when describing these explorations.

Immediate Responses to the projects

The field notes revealed I did not unite with my digital counterpart as I had imagined. I was neither at 'one' with my image or 'divided' from it. The following quotes are of my own notes. They are extracts taken from my field notes in the form of video audio and written documentaries that have reflected on my experience. A full account of all six of these autobiographical experiences can be found in the appendix of this thesis. All of the text in the appendix is based on a sequence of events taken in chronological order from (i to vi).

My reflections articulate moments when I felt a closer connection to my digital counterpart when I felt the shadow of the video image cross over my 'actual' body in studio project (i). It is during this exploration that I compare it to similar experiences of that when one feels the presence of another person's shadow crossing over your body in the sunlight.

Project i

There are flickers of moments when you believe it's 'real' these two people are interacting and talking. When the digital body crossed my body I really could feel it. This is paradoxical because I felt a stronger feeling of embodiment when watching the video of the 2 Lorna's but experiencing it I really felt the shadow of the digital Lorna cross my body and that was amazing- I also felt embodied then too. (Moore 2010, p.158 Appendix 1).¹¹⁵

Even though there were flickering moments of embodiment during these experiments my field notes describe a heightened sense of the 'me-not-me'

phenomena which induced an amplified perception of experiencing more of me. This was explained as neither a oneness or a division but a slight perceptual shift in displacing the 'actual' body beyond its normal parameters. My field notes from project (i) do not describe any moments where I felt estranged from my digital counterpart. Contrary to the latter, I describe the interaction with my digital other as a comfortable and almost a natural experience.

Trying to remember the script distracted me interacting with my other. I felt 'home' in the experience but I think I felt more 'home' watching the video. Watching the video was stranger than performing it. Because I had a secondary source to look at (the laptop) I could focus more on the experience. The actuality of the experience felt 'home' but also I think I felt more embodied watching the video. Watching the video there are moments of union and an interactive relationship with each other where one is affected by the other (Moore 2010, p.158 Appendix1).¹¹⁶

The more studio projects I did the stronger the connection became with my digital counterpart. This becomes more apparent when I automatically synchronized with my digital image. This is most notable during my reflections in projects (ii) and (iii) where I explored experimental movement. The following quotes are taken from my field notes to describe my experiences in project (ii) and (iii).

Project ii

We began mimicking each other, copying each other and at times mirroring each other. The video image looks different from me, it looks solid and thinner. When the bodies collide or overlap you can see the transparency of the digital 'other' over the corporeal body ... I felt comfortable with her in my own little world perhaps of a 'oneness' where my body extension is part and a[part] at one and the same time. I

*could materialise part of myself that was once just a passing action, a history gone forever (Moore 2010, p.159 Appendix 1).*¹¹⁷

project iii

*There are definitely moments of fluidity where both bodies are moving together like a swan. This doubling in unison feels connected more, where arms and legs are floating in space almost identical ... The impact it had on my physical body was it worked in terms of me feeling embodied with her when we were doing synchronised movements together ... When I am looking at the video documentation when I see the two Lorna's moving synchronously I feel it's natural not weird, relaxed and even maybe a feeling of sameness or oneness. Is sameness the same as oneness? I am not sure ... There is a struggle between a striving for sameness and difference. This in itself is an oxymoron (Moore 2010, p.160 Appendix 1).*¹¹⁸

The field notes suggest that I felt simultaneously 'self' and 'other' and 'not divided' from my digital counterpart and 'not whole'. Equally it was becoming more apparent to me that if I was to seek oneness in my image then I must be searching for 'something' lost in myself. This line of thinking correlated with the Lacanian idea of seeking wholeness in the other. It had not occurred to me at this stage in the research how much the Mirror Stage was pertinent to this work. Although I did not feel I had connected with something 'lost' it can be understood from the field notes that I had gained a heightened awareness of 'something more of me' within these six studio projects. The following are extracts from my field notes from project iv and v.

Project iv

When both Lornas are crossing each other carrying a chair you can't really work out which one is the projection and which one is the flesh. However looking at the video they are both a projection. We have a projection of a projection and a projection of

*the flesh body. Watching the part of the video where both Lorna's place their legs on top of each other it's like looking at co-joined twins-one whole but two bodies. The relationship between the three bodies (the two digital Lornas and the shadow of one Lorna) is interesting because you still focus on the projected Lorna and the shadow. I think the shadow is more alien as there is no identity, but it is still comfortable (Moore 2010, Appendix 1, p.161).*¹¹⁹

Project v

*There was something beautiful about this experience. It's like tracing paper and trying to trace my own presence. When the digital image moved I moved. I was following her. Watching it gives me a real sense of immersion...looking at it you can't work out the real image or the virtual ... I really like that. I am scrolling across the wall ... if this was a pencil I would be drawing around myself. I am following her and the unity of both images is slightly off key...there are times when the two bodies are identical. It's almost synchronized...I do like the synchronicity of it ...when the virtual image turns around so I can see myself from the front and the back at the same time...that's quite interesting it's like seeing yourself from a 360 degree angle I like that. When I was doing this I remember feeling the presence of the shadow so I was aware of the 'other' even though I could not see her ... I could feel her and also feel her behind me, probably through the change in the light. Mimicry again is happening. The digital image is controlling the real image. I really like the fact you can't tell which one is which the virtual and the actual (Moore 2010 Appendix 1, p. 161).*¹²⁰

In addition what came out of these explorations was a stronger emphasis on the 'me-not-me' phenomena where I alternated between self and other. It was this oscillation that became the starting point for I-RE (ii).

2.5.2: Inter-Reactive Exploration II



Fig. 2. Mander Shopping Centre 2010 (See DVD Appendix 4)

Title: Windows A & B

Location: Mander Shopping Centre Wolverhampton

Informants: Members of the public

Key question

Does the digital other have an emotional impact on the self? Can we challenge the impact emotional responses may have on the alienation between self and digital other?

Statement

My aim was to present the same conditions to invited informants to perform with themselves as I had done in my studio projects in I-REI. Having asked a number of participants to take part in an identical framework they declined. It was proving to be too difficult to expect participants to imagine they were performing with themselves and being videoed at the same time. Therefore it was decided a shopping centre may be a more natural environment for members of the public to come across their

projected video image in an empty shop window. By using real-time video projection I could observe participants interactions and responses in the Mander Shopping Centre in Wolverhampton. It was important to use key words in my questionnaires to determine if any emotional dynamic was occurring between the performativity of actual self and digital other.

Taking this I-RE out into the public realm was a way to understand how a variety of participants would interact with their digital other. I observed how people responded to their image, and I also asked for 'knee jerk' reactions to capture firsthand experiences. Alongside this the key words used in the questionnaires to represent their experiences ranged from positive, negative and 'in-between'. These were words that could be understood as either positive or negative depending on their body language and dialogue. These methods were used to determine if participants felt their image was alienated from them, as other. This was based on looking for the impact the image may have on the informants' emotional response, or an indifference to their image. In confronting their digital other it was important to observe whether it caused an emotional response in the participants to determine if their emotional responses were met with detachment or indifference to their image.

Description

I-RE II consisted of two shop window projections at the Mander shopping centre in Wolverhampton. The windows are referred to as window A and window B. Both windows used real-time video projection where members of the public could interact with their real-time video image in the windows. Alongside I-REII, I was also pursuing my last studio project at the University of Wolverhampton. This consisted of me working in my studio space where I was experimenting with projecting my pre-recorded video image over my actual face.

The activity in windows A and B had been constructed to enable members of the public to come across their image. Those that took part in the interactions were asked immediately for feedback on the experience. It is important to point out that the decision to make responses as quick and as robust as possible was to limit the impact I would have on the results. In the same way I aimed to make feedback as open as possible through initial first hand responses. Likewise, the questionnaires with only key words to select seemed appropriate and less time consuming. However, although I was aware that this method of collecting responses may be difficult to analyze due to the lack of in depth probing; these instant 'knee jerk' results were designed to record the instinctual reality of lived experience, rather than rehearsed or contemplated. In doing so it serves as a way to prevent informants to respond in a way which they thought I wanted.

The windows A & B were set up using the real-time video programme Isadora¹²¹. Isadora was initially designed for the live dance performance company Troika Ranch.¹²² It was created by Mark Coniglio, a media artist, composer and programmer who is recognized as a pioneer in the integration of live performance and interactive digital technologies. Each window had one live video camera placed inside the empty shop at the Mander centre pointing outwards towards shoppers. As they walked past the window they could see their real-time video image projected in the window on a time delay of two seconds. The camera was placed carefully so it was not intrusive. Both a real-time live video feed and a two second delayed live video feed were superimposed to enable participants to interact with their digital doubles. Window A projected a full body image of shoppers. Window B, however, projected a smaller portrait image of their head and shoulders. Alongside this I observed peoples responses to their image in the shopping centre. This video documentation can be

referred to in appendix 4 (see DVD). Window B was also presented as part of a conference at Wolverhampton University in the Bessant Gallery for one evening, and one evening at the opening of the university's MA show.

The differences between window A and B were primarily based on scale. Both windows used a delayed live video feed of two seconds. The scale of the full body image, in window A was to encourage more than one individual to interact with their image. In this way both the live video feed and the delayed live video feed could interact with each other. The scale was large enough for many shoppers to interact with each other at the same time. Window B however was organized in a similar way with the same video delay but the projection was focusing more on a one-to-one individual interaction between the shopper and their portrait image. This was to encourage informants to move closer to their image to interact with it.

The informants completed questionnaires during the I-RE which consisted of 45 key words. The words represented a variety of emotions to determine if their interactions caused an emotional impact on them. Informants were asked to select words which most reflected their experience. The words consisted of 15 positive words, 15 negative words and 15 words which could be understood as either positive or negative depending on the context. The rationale for having a balanced number of positive, negative and ambiguous words was to allow informants to express a wide range of emotional responses as far as possible to avoid being coerced into a particular response. The words were laid out in a randomized manner so there was no pattern to their responses. The more ambiguous words such as 'freaky', 'wicked', 'disjointed' etc were interpreted as positive or negative responses depending on their body language, facial expressions and overall responses. (see graph 1 Appendix 1.p.166) The graph illustrates the frequency of words associated with their

experience from window B. Out of the 47 informants from window B the three most occurring words were 'playful', 'fun' and 'weird'. All 47 informants involved in window B were a combination of informants from the Mander Shopping Centre, the Bessant Gallery as part of the University of Wolverhampton's student conference and the opening evening of the MA show. The graph indicates there was a very low number of informants who felt 'estrangement' 'alienated', 'frightened' , and/or 'disturbed' by the experience. In window A only 11 informants took part in the questionnaires. The three most common words used to relay their experience was 'weird' 'freaky', and 'fun.' However due to the limited numbers of informants the statistical significance of window A may be questionable. This does not however affect the responses relayed in window B which demonstrates that a high number did not feel alienated from their video image.

Furthermore in both accounts the terms 'freaky' and 'weird' have suggested a more positive response to the work rather than a negative one. This has been understood by their positive responses when articulating these terms. All informants who articulated these terms responded in good spirits and where they enjoyed the experience as odd and strange.

Studio project (vi) From I-RE I



Fig.3. L.Moore: Studio project vi 2010 (See DVD Appendix 4)

Alongside I-REII, I was also exploring my last studio project from I-RE I (project vi) where I interacted with my digital other at the University of Wolverhampton in my studio. It is important to understand that this particular exploration had a significant impact on this research. More importantly it was this particular experience that began to shape the parameters for the next I-RE.

In this last project I had projected a pre-recorded video image of my face fully covering my 'actual' face to see if I could be immersed within the image and have a deeper connection with it. The recorded video image of my head moved and 'spoke' words while my 'actual' real face was quiet and still. The impact this had on me was very powerful and it was recorded in the field notes how strange the experience was. As the video image was projected over my actual face I began to synchronize myself with the eyes, mouth and lips and the more I did this the more I felt embodied to my image. This was seen as a turning point in the research that led to the formation of

I-RE III. I felt that the experience was most weird and uncanny which drew me into a part of myself I felt I had not explored. The familiar image of 'me' became unknown and alien yet I was drawn into it and mesmerized by my image. Overall it was this strange embodiment which focused the research towards the uncanny experience. In my notes I refer to the uncanny and the embodiment with the image as a form of 'self-touching'. It was these thoughts that led me to question the impact the uncanny had with the relationship between the actual self and the digital counterpart and the Lacanian real. As this interaction was so difficult to articulate it occurred to me that there may be a possible link with the Lacanian 'real'. I began to investigate the overlapping of the actual and the digital using real-time video to understand the experience. Below are extracts from my field notes.

... it looks a bit demonic...for some reason it's the weird and the uncanny. Are we closer to ourselves when it's weird or uncanny? I am totally fascinated by this one...is the image me? Yes and no...would I feel the same if it was someone else's face over mine...I don't know really. There is something strange about this. I know for Lacan the image would be the veil of the real ... it's like the dark side... again synchronicity seems to be cropping up. It really does have an impact on me...it's weird. I could spend a long time immersed in myself ... I did feel more embodied in this. The more synchronous the more embodied. Did it feel weird? Yeah I suppose it did. Do I see myself as different? Yeah it is different but there is something quite satisfying, exciting and strange about the whole experience really. To look at it you would imagine it would feel more disembodied but in fact it felt more embodied". "The inside is outside the outside is inside. I want to navigate myself so I fit perfectly. There does not seem to be a power difference with these two images we have doubling, cloning, replication, balance, slotting together, and fitting in, synchronicity. So did I learn

anything? Speaking through an 'other' is also interesting. I did like the strangeness of this and the weirdness.

Is this all about the trauma of the lost unity with 'self' seeking what has been left behind through a dislocation? Perhaps through the alignment of 'actual self' and digital other' we can strip away the veil of the real. As we exist between the real and the imaginary ie the symbolic (Lacan) we imagine the real. Maybe rather than imagine the real (a deeper embodiment with oneself and others) perhaps embodiment is where we self-touch (Moore 2010 Appendix 1, p.162-3).¹²³

Immediate Responses to I-RE II (Windows A & B)

Meanwhile returning back to window A & B at the Mander Centre, my own experiences within these I-REs was one of fun and weirdness. The virtual portrait was fun to be able to get closer to a more 3D image of me and the full virtual body image was weird and exciting as I could experiment a lot with my body and that of others who shared the experience with me. There was a feeling of dislocation from my physical body and also an attachment which was disorientating. Overall I did not feel indifferent to my image as a separate entity nor was I unified to my image.

Informants that came across their image at the Mander Centre responded in a number of ways. Some deliberately avoided the projection whilst others played happily with their image and others were horrified to see themselves. It can be suggested from their instant reactions that the key words they selected (weird, playful, freaky and fun) reflected their emotional responses to the work in a positive way. Responding without thinking appeared to give the agency of the informants a heightened awareness of their experiences. Through a deliberation of quick responses informants could not rehearse their answers and predict perhaps what I was looking for. Their responses were charged with real emotion which would have

been difficult to fake in such a short period of time. There was no evidence of indifference and/or detachment to their image once informants had participated in the interaction.

However, observing the informant's interactions in such short interactive bursts of engagement was difficult to assess if they experienced the image as other to the self. Though informant's emotional responses did contribute to an understanding that they were attached to the image in an emotional manner. This may suggest that the image is not understood as alien, estranged or other as their responses did not indicate an indifference or detachment from the image. Equally there was not enough depth to the I-RE to determine if the image was a part of self. The field notes describe this exploration as not having enough parameters to determine whether there was a synthesis between the informants' actual self and digital other. This was based on the time informants spent with their video image. Those who took part did not spend more than 3 minutes interacting with their image. I suspect this was due to the public exposure of informants perhaps feeling a spectacle amongst shoppers. Though the short time span was adequate to capture an unrehearsed response I felt informants needed to spend more time with their image in private. Overall the comparison between my own 'knee jerk' responses and those of the informants were not that dissimilar.

2.5.3:Inter-Reactive Exploration III



Fig. 4. Eagleworks: *Touching the other* 2010 (See DVD Appendix 4: I-RE III)

Title: Touching the other

Location: Eagleworks Studios & Mander shopping centre Wolverhampton

Informants: Art Audience/members of the public

Key Question

Do we alternate between the physical self and the digital non-self to get to know more of the self; and is this oscillation an uncanny experience?

Statement

In I-REs I and II, I did not experience oneness or a unity with the digital other. What came out of my explorations when I performed with my video image was a body experience that simultaneously felt and experienced itself as both self and other,

thus a return to Lacan's Mirror Stage. Hence I found myself alternating between self and other.

However, what was most significant to this research was the experience I encountered in the last studio project (vi) from I-RE I. This is where I superimposed my virtual projected face over my actual face; I described my response as a most powerful embodied uncanny encounter with my image. It was this experience that prompted me to look for a connection between the uncanny and a deeper connection to self. Subsequently it was these ideas which informed this exploration – I-RE III. Here informants were invited to superimpose their real-time video image over my pre-recorded image in a private one-to-one interaction. As a result this I-RE may begin to question how we might be shaped by the experience of the 'other' as uncanny. Hence we may be able to perceptually step outside ourselves to feel a deeper connection to the image as part of 'self'. It may be that the video technology might be able to help us transcend a part of self through the digital counterpart to experience a deeper connection to self.

Description

The way in which informants experience was documented from this I-RE was modelled on immediate video reactions caught on video camera and informal interviews. All informants were asked the same question about their first-hand experience. The video camera was also used as a tool to record the ambiance of the event acting like a microphone so it was not too intrusive to capture their responses. So when I was asking for responses I held the camera in my hand like a microphone and not directed in their faces. At a later stage some informants were invited back to the video performance to experience the event again so they could reflect on their first and second experience. These were conducted as informal interviews within the

same space. This way it was possible to compare any notable changes they may have experienced from their first time. The rationale behind recalling informants' responses a second time was to determine if their pre-knowledge of the event had a greater or lesser impact on the uncanny experience. There were two locations for this I-RE; one was at *Eagleworks* studios and the other in the *Mander Shopping centre* in Wolverhampton. This was an opportunity to have a mixed audience and higher numbers of informants. The combination of instant responses and interviews enabled me to probe deeper into their experiences whilst at the same time gather automatic rather than pre-meditated reactions.

This I-RE consisted of a video projection of my face similar to that of a portrait projected onto a gallery wall. Participants were invited to sit in a gallery space wearing headphones. In front of them on a wall was their real-time video portrait projected. In an attempt to create 'liveness' to the digital counterpart the headphones captured my breath and ambiance during the video recording. Meanwhile my pre-recorded video portrait was superimposed over their real-time video portrait. (See DVD Appendix 4:I-REIII)

Immediate Responses to the I-RE:

My interactions with these I-REs were described as 'weird' in the sense I could experience myself oscillating between past and present where the presence of my actual body and my digital counterpart interlinked where I felt 'more' of me in the interaction. The culmination of experience between the actual 'me' and, the live video of me and the pre-recorded image of me all contributed to the 'me-not-me' experience. It was not frightening, and it was not other but rather more familiar and strange – uncanny.

What came out of these two explorations for the informants at Eagleworks studios and the Mander Shopping Centre was a high numbers of responses maintaining they felt it was 'weird, strange and playful'. There were some informants who did find the experience uncomfortable and uneasy and even fewer who found it a frightening experience. The evidence is suggesting that those who experienced the work twice had a much stronger uncanny experience than the first time.

***Interviewee 1** Question: You mentioned it was uncanny last time what did you mean? Answer: It was unsettling because I could believe it was a real person...another person even though I knew it was not another person (during alignment)...this is when the faces were aligned... (2010 Appendix 2, p.176)¹²⁴*

Subsequently in comparing my own experiences to that of the informants I would propose at this stage in the enquiry that experiences were not too dissimilar except perhaps for the fact I was more familiar with the I-RE than those who took part in it. I was less playful in the experience as I was aware of exactly what would happen. The weirdness I felt soon dissipated through repeated familiarity with the interactions. (See DVD Appendix 4) The informants and I did feel we oscillated between the 'me-not-me' experiences and there were brief moments of feeling suspended in the image. This is evidenced in the following extract from the interviews.

***Interviewee 4...**I felt you were behind me...I felt we melted and we were one thing...suddenly I got back to me when I could see me... I lost myself in you. I was expecting to feel really uneasy and felt like you were over taking my body. That did not happen. I felt like I was one. ...it was one we were one with the image...it was not you and it was not me ...it was your hair and the shivers run down my spine...I knew you were touching your face but I was getting the sensation (2010 Appendix 2, p. 179)¹²⁵.*

These interviews which can be accessed in appendix 2 have been demonstrating moments of the uncanny experience when the actual body and the digital body were aligned to create a composite image. However it is also apparent in these interviews that the video technology could not sustain the experience of being suspended in the image through the oscillation between the actual body and the digital image. Therefore it was also important to pursue further research into other technologies to move the research forward and prolong the embodied experience.

As a result of this research the following I-RE was able to demonstrate the way new digital technology could be used with Isadora as a tool to augment the corporeal body and the digital body and extend the embodied experience.

2.5.4: Inter-Reactive Exploration IV



Fig.5: *In[bodi]mental* at The Public west Bromwich 2011 (See DVD Appendix 4)

Title: *In[bodi]mental*

Location: The Public, West Bromwich

Group: Members of the public

Key Question

To what extent can new digital technological affordances now allow us to embody the self of another?

Statement

What was now beginning to shape this research was the possibility that real-time video, displayed through the head mounted display systems HMDs may be the missing link in suspending the notion of a division between the corporeal self and the digital other. In doing so could the technology enable us to embody the other and thus become a part of self? Furthermore is the technology revealing elements of 'one' self within other selves in new ways? Subsequently the uncanny experience may be a disruption in our pre-conceived ideas of self experienced through the eyes of the other. It may be we are united as a whole divided by the technology only to return to a more fulfilling unity with the self? Can the practice enable me to experience more of me through the eyes of the other where we unite-divide-unite with another?

Description

Participants were invited to interact with another persons' digital counterpart in the form of a body swapping experiment. Here informants were asked to work in pairs where each participant wore a head mounted display system. The live web camera attached to the HMD showed the live video feed. As each person's live video feed was swapped over each participant could see through the eyes of the other person. Under my instructions informants were asked to perform a number of small activities such as massaging their legs and knees, stretching out their legs and rotating their

feet. Each person took it in turns to lead the other in the performance. As instructions were given spectators watching the event could see the viewpoint of each of the performers swapped around within the large TV monitors placed behind them. Informants were asked to complete a questionnaire to capture their experiences. The rationale behind the questionnaires was to explore any links between embodiment and the uncanny experience. The questionnaires encouraged informants to respond to a number of statements either agreeing, disagreeing, or to neither agree nor disagree. These statements were put in place to determine how they felt during the experience and whether they felt embodied to the live image and how much self-awareness they had during this interaction. Due to the high numbers of the public visiting the venue video interviews would have been too time consuming and problematic to do so. In order to offset this I placed much more emphasis on observing the informants through video capture during the experience to give as much understanding of their responses as possible. The combination of observing informants and asking for initial responses along with the questionnaires served as a more convenient method of recording informant's responses and reactions. This I-RE was implemented at *The Public* located at West Bromwich West Midlands in June 2011.

There were 30 informants who were involved in *In[bodi]mental* consisting of a number of age ranges. The questionnaire consisted of statements placed into three categories: the first category explored how they felt in the experience, and the second questioned whether there was an embodiment to the digital counterpart, while the third was based on their awareness of the here and now in the present.

Immediate Responses to I-RE:

My interactions in this exploration were, at times, the belief that the other person's body was my own. This was stronger during synchronized movements. Though I felt the other body was my own I did not feel transported into their body and disown my own body. What came out of this I-RE for the informants was a strong connection to the digital counterpart through synchronous movements. The informants were very quick to intuitively copy each other under instructions. The following are some statements from informants' experiences.

(Male) Child *"It was a weird good experience....very interesting...really clever...it was quite convincing...."*

(Teenager) *"Whenever I moved she copied...I felt like I was her..."*

(Teenager) *"It was unrealistic and I felt her body was mine...it was also real..."*

(Male) Adult *"I felt it was most effective when we were standing up...its quite strange...after a while you try to synchronize yourself..."*

(Male adult) *"The more it's synchronized the more you doubt your feelings..."*

(2011 Appendix 1, pp. 173-4)¹²⁶

The feedback from the questionnaires is suggesting that about 50 per cent of informants felt the other person's body was theirs. (see appendix 1 tables 1-3 pp.171-3). The findings from *In[bodi]mental* are discussed in chapter three as a contribution to new knowledge. As a result it has been through the practice that we are coming to see connections between them were the digital other has felt part of self. This has been evidenced through various responses, such as... 'I believe your hands are mine'... 'I felt like I was her'... 'Very interesting...really clever...it was quite convincing...' ... 'It was unrealistic and I felt her body was mine...it was also real...' (2011, Appendix 1. pp.173-4).¹²⁷

Each I-RE has had a particular focus on; a synthesis between actual self and digital other; exploring the oscillation between the 'me-not-me' phenomena and its relationship with the uncanny, and embodying the other as a part of self. These key questions have raised some doubt on the notion that the digital other is a separate entity to the subject.

In critiquing the field notes from these I-REs has shed some light on the relationships between the self and digital counterpart – self and world. We can see the way the technology has stretched the material body and raised more questions regarding the self as one single unit of corporeality. The aesthetic merit of the I-REs has been varied throughout. The one-to-one performances of I-RE (i) were visually graceful, but the I-REs (ii- and iv) were much more transparent in the way they worked. Engaging informants between the making and the product was an attempt to holistically involve the informant in the research. This undertaking contributed to their responses in the knowledge of knowing how the 'illusion' worked. This was most appropriate to I-RE (iii and iv) so both the emotional and intellectual responses could be recorded. As the researcher being both the producer and product of the research I was able to shift from 'I' to 'other' through a variety of writing and recording methods as a means to turn away from the work in order to move closer and look inward. In this way both my own emotional and intellectual components of my self could be analysed. All responses in these I-REs are a result of perceptions creating a reality through the lived experiences.

The appeal of using Isadora in I-RE (ii-iv) was its user-friendly interface and the simplicity of the technology to do remarkable things outside my own realm of technical expertise. It enabled me to work across the disciplines of art and technology and place myself in a multiplicity of roles. I was in total control of both the

creative process and the making of the I-REs. Working in this way made it possible for me to phenomenologically continue to assess the experience of both the process of making and the actual making which has contributed to this research. As a video performance artist, using Isadora, has become a tool that encompasses both the process and the making of work which has extended the parameters of the bodies capabilities. The real-time capacity of the technology enabled me to capture the agency of my body in the moment and also capture historical traces of my body through video delay techniques. It was through Isadora that the liminal space between the self and the other was suspended where we could be immersed in the other.

As a result we have seen the way in which auto-ethnophenomenology has a coming together of the 'I' and other. Whilst 'auto' refers to 'I' and 'ethno' refers to a combination of many we have seen how this method has focused on the significance of the 'I' of the researcher. In doing so the relational aspect between the 'I' and the other is equally represented. Furthermore we have come to understand how through the I-REs these positions can shift between the observers and the observed transposed through the digital technologies. It is through these mutual experiences that we can come to arrive at a more 'negotiated version of reality' (Pink 2007, p.24) Likewise for Varela, Thompson & Rosch 'Reflection is not just on experience, reflection is a form of experience'. It is where thought impacts experience and experience impacts thought. (Varela, Thompson & Rosch, ,1993, p.27)¹²⁸

Visual technologies as tools for creating visual records have received considerable criticism. This of course relates back to the problematic assumption that reality is visible, observable and recordable in video or photography. This study challenges the assumption that the real exists only in the form of the material, which can be

accessed through the visible “just as reality is not solely visible or observable; images have no fixed or single meanings and are not capable of capturing an objective reality” (Pink 2007, p.32).¹²⁹

However it is through the capturing qualities of informants’ experiences that these visual technologies are intended to be understood as tools to refer to versions of reality as referents of visible and observable phenomena that are embedded in the experience and everyday practices of the lived experience. We see in chapter three how these experiences have been interpreted through those occurrences that took place between subjects as a contribution of new knowledge to the field.

In[bodi]mental: The In[body] of another

This chapter outlines the findings from I-REs I-III but primarily focuses on the conclusions drawn from I-RE IV *In[bodi]mental* and the contribution to knowledge. It discusses what is original regarding this research and makes a distinction between the experience of embodiment and In[bodi]ment and the way the self is perceived. As a result of this study the chapter proceeds with an introduction to the augmented self experienced through other selves via digital technology. The implications of these findings are discussed from the perspective of neurology, psychology and phenomenology, to challenge our perception of the material body within the field of video performance and digital media art practice.

3:1 Findings from I-REs I-III

The following are the main findings from three of the I-REs taken from the experience of the informants and myself compiled from the responsive field notes, questionnaires, interviews and instant reactions.

Findings and correlations between the corporeal self and the digital other:

- There was a correlation between embodiment and unity with the image when watching the digital images synchronize with each other on the video documentation. An increased awareness of self in the moment during emotional responses
- Nothing to support a loss of self in the digital other
- No substantiation of an estrangement and/or alienation from the digital counterpart

- An apparent relationship between the uncertainty of distinguishing which image was theirs' and which one was a representation and the feeling of weirdness
- An oscillation between sameness and difference, the 'me-not-me' experience
- A relationship between sameness and synchronicity in the actual experience
- A doubling of seeing-oneself see-oneself had links with strangeness, attachment and familiarity with the digital image
- There was a parallel between vision and feeling touch
- Highly emotive responses such as 'weird', 'freaky', 'strange' and 'fun'
- A correlation between oscillation and the uncanny experience
- A connection in the belief the digital image was real and the uncanny
- A correlation between synchronicity, alignment and immersion of the image
- An association between embodiment and empathy

What has become apparent in these findings however is an increased awareness of the self 'in the moment' during these lived experiences. This has been compounded through a strong emphasis on an oscillation between the corporeal self and the digital other, where they are the same and different 'me-not-me' experiences.

These experiences resonate with Lacan's Mirror Stage¹³⁰ during the pre-language stage of the infant where the infant has an uneasy relationship with its specular image. This is the Imaginary stage for the infant who imagines what it is through images and reflections. For Lacan the image is not real and the infant imagines a

promise of completeness within the image as other; hence it is through the lack of motor co-ordination the infant's body feels fragmented from its specular image. The findings from these I-REs revealed a striking reference to Lacan's MS where the informants and I alternated between the corporeal self and our digital other as a 'me-not-me' experience. The hypothesis outlined at the beginning of chapter two was informed by the MS as a means of finding a promise of completeness in meeting my own digital counterpart.

Subsequently, though I see similarities between the MS and the I-REs, my own experiences were not *felt* fragmentations from my digital video image but rather from my place of standing in the world as I know it. There were moments when I felt dislocated from my grounding in the world. Together, the heightened awareness of a disruption in my proprioception, culminated in me feeling a closer connection to my digital counterpart. My perceived split was not between me and my image but between me and my place of standing in the actual world. This is substantiated through the knowledge my body is grounded in the actual world; but felt transposed through the technology into my image. This is a place where I can revolve between forgetting the body and returning to the body. Using a video delay within the real-time technology assisted the actual body in its ability to perceptually shift from one location to another. Consequently I propose that the actual body can break learnt habits of behaviour and experience new ones.

Drew Leder in his book *The Absent Body* (1990)¹³¹ proposes that the human body is a creature of habit where we learn skills through example which eventually becomes part of one's corporeality. When these rituals are broken or disturbed the body returns to its corporeality and becomes more self-aware. During those moments in I-REI when I felt a similitude between my body and the digital image I had forgotten

the physical body. It was only when my body felt displaced through the video projection that I felt more aware of it. When we are immersed in a purposeful activity we don't leave the body behind we forget the body, so when the body is in pain, for example, we become more aware of our corporeality.

I am suggesting it is through using appropriate video technology that we can come to experience a shift in our psyche which is difficult to define. The significance of IREs I-III is how the technology used enabled us to shift between the conscious and the subconscious to experience these transitions. Moreover it was the replacement of basic video technology to real-time video (Isadora) that facilitated these encounters. Ultimately, though these experiences are difficult to articulate in words they may have some relationship to Freud's *The Uncanny* (1919). A concept that is rooted in the psyche, understood as a condition between the conscious and the subconscious, where something that was once familiar is now estranged through repression. These are the key elements which are informing this research; where I specifically compare the familiar self and the unfamiliar digital other to the 'me' 'not-me' experiences encountered in Lacan's MS and informants' experiences in I-RE IV *In[bodi]mental*. When I relate to the 'me-not-me' encounters I am explaining the strange relationship between these binary oppositions where there are moments of recognition of the actual self in the digital counterpart. This is most apparent when the images are synchronized and aligned as one composite image.

Oscillating between the 'me-not-me' experiences has contributed to the uncanny encountered within these I-REs. It is this flux which has created a tension between the known and the unknown together with the actual body and its digital counterpart. I suspect, these findings are also revealing a correlation between the unexplained experiences of the uncanny and Lacan's impossible real which I will discuss later on

in this chapter. However though Freud's uncanny has roots in the frightening; I am suggesting that the uncanny experiences informants and myself articulated were 'oddly' positive strange experiences and not within the realm of the frightening arising from some repressed childhood complexities. These experiences were most powerful during the alignment and intersection of the actual body and the digital counterpart in I-RE III and IV. What seems to have contributed to an uncanny experience was the informants' uncertainty of which image was of them and which was of the other participant. Therefore what induced an uncanny experience was the ambiguity of a perceived shift in the body's proprioception where the individual momentarily stepped into its digital counterpart and back to the corporeality of the body. This I would describe as a 'lived' moment between the conscious and the subconscious as an uncanny encounter.

The common use of emotive words such as 'weird', 'fun', 'strange', 'playful' and 'freaky' were emotional responses which suggested a strong connection to the image. These expressions represented experiences which were difficult to articulate in language, in particular the uncanny experience. The real-time digital technologies enabled the actual body to feel suspended in the image. This may account for the feeling of being in the moment between past and present, self and other. In the same way as the time delay on the video enabled informants to move into their image where they could see-onese self seeing-onese self. The latter terms were emphasized in an excitable positive manner suggesting their interactions were not met with indifference or estrangement; on the contrary there appeared to be an exhilarating tension in the experience.

The following are some informants' reflections on their initial responses along with others who had been invited back to I-RE III to reflect on their experience for a second time a few days later.

Interviewee 6...*The first time I felt possessed and then I got used to it...*" (Appendix 2. 2010:182)¹³² **Interviewee 1**...*the first time produced a genuine feeling of the uncanny when you have never done it before*" (Appendix 2. 2010, p.176)¹³³
Interviewee 5... *First time I was more shocked and this time I knew what to expect....* (Appendix 2. 2010, p.181)¹³⁴ **Interviewee 10**... *I knew what I wanted to do this time. I did not feel lost like the first time* (Appendix 2. 2010, p.189).¹³⁵

For those who were interviewed they were given the opportunity to reflect on their firsthand experiences. They could articulate in more detail any references or synonyms related to the uncanny and any movement of oscillation between self and other as a form of embodiment. The findings have indicated that those who were invited back for a second time to experience I-RE III responded with less urgency and passion as their first experiences had indicated. Thus suggesting that the impact the I-RE had on informants was much more powerful during their first experience which I believe captured the essence of 'in the moment' which was then passed and could not be repeated.

These first hand experiences revealed stronger uncanny responses and a heightened sense of self-awareness. During their second experience informants focused much more on synchronizing themselves with the digital image. In addition getting quick responses was much more telling by their spontaneity indicating an unconscious reaction to the I-REs of being in the moment. It also follows that their first reactions had more urgency about them when describing the experience using words and phrases such as 'wow', 'weird', 'strange', 'spooky', 'freaky'. I am

suggesting that these reactions are symptoms of the uncanny which were not prescribed, but automatic involuntary reactions which may have links to a primordial part of the subconscious experience understood as uncanny.

The findings have been indicating that in order to maintain the feeling of embodiment further technological research needed to be undertaken. Therefore, it was more likely that emerging technologies could determine whether there was a relationship between the feeling of embodiment to the image and an uncanny experience to sustain this experience through prolonged encounters. The video technology used was not able to suspend the informants' embodied experience within the image. Though there were moments of an uncanny embodiment during the intersection between the corporeal body and the digital other this 'moment' had yet to be further explained and investigated. It was becoming more apparent that these alternated states were causing an uncanny reaction at the moment of their intersection. It was these occurrences which led to further probing of these experiences in accordance to make sense of the impact these experiences had on the self. The findings were encouraging in that they inferred that one may be able to embody another subject and literally stand in somebody else's shoes through a meeting place between bodies enabled by the technology. The correlation between the alignment of images, synchronicity and mimicry corresponded with the feeling of embodiment. The informants felt a desire to be in unison with the digital image understood as other.

Interviewee 4 ...you were in my head...I tried to match up with your face... I wanted my face to fit with yours...it felt right...it was not weird or uncomfortable I forgot you and forgot me. (Appendix 2. 2010, p.179)¹³⁶

Interviewee 5 ...*This time I was trying to match myself up and at one point I merged it was spot on it was brilliant. I thought I got it right...I wanted to get it exactly right...I could imagine what your skull was like...* (Appendix 2. 2010, p.181)¹³⁷

Interviewee 10 ...*I wanted to line up with your alignment...its interesting when faces match up its different to distinguish who is who even though we have totally different faces...*(Appendix 2. 2010, p.189)¹³⁸

These moments of embodiment can be described as 'hovering' in the image where one feels a similitude with the image. During these instances informants did feel embodied to the digital counterpart. This was even more compounded when both the actual and the digital image worked together in unison copying each others' movements. This was most encountered when the two images created a composite image during an exact alignment of facial features and expressions. One explanation of this similitude may be a link between the discovery of Mirror Neurons and the embodiment of the digital other. In his book *Mirroring People: The science of Empathy and how we connect with others* (2009) neurologist Marco Iacoboni explains how these neurons fire in the brain when we watch another person perform a similar action to our own where it is thought the observer may feel what it feels like to move in the observed way.

Insofar as when informants are in unison they have more of an empathy with the image thus contributing to the embodied feeling. These are exciting explorations which could have a profound impact on the way in which we perceive the self in relationship with the digital other. To explore these findings further in *In[bodi]mental* I-RE IV I introduced head mounted display systems (HMDs) to challenge these observations using direct instructions for informants to copy each other's movements. The live video feed for each HMD was swapped over so each informant

could see the viewpoint of the other through the HMD. It was also looking for a way to suspend informants in the image at the intersection between the actual body and the digital other.

I-REs I-III had been the stepping-stone in leading the research in the direction of discovering more about selfhood. This has led to an exploration in new digital technologies where we are seeing the emergence of an augmented self. I-RE I incorporated basic video projection to challenge these ideas which was then replaced with real-time video technologies in I-RE II and III. Though the real-time video technologies could momentarily immerse the informants in the digital image it could not sustain it. It was not until the introduction of the HMDs in conjunction with real-time video in I-RE IV entitled *In[bodi]mental* that the research moved on. I-RE IV proved to be crucial to this investigation as this is where the technology had the potential to suspend the corporeal body within the digital counterpart.

3:2 *In[bodi]mental* I-RE IV

The following is a summary of those findings taken from the experiences of the informants and myself.

- A relationship between exhilarating and weird
- Correlation between embodiment and synchronicity
- Informants felt the other body as part of their own
- Self was momentarily immersed within the other
- A link between self-objectification and unity with the image
- Correlation between the uncanny and a belief in the other body as their own
- A feeling of being suspended in the other

- A correlation between synchronicity, alignment and immersion of the image
- There was a relationship between embodiment and empathy
- A connection in the belief the digital image was real and the uncanny
- A correlation between oscillation and the uncanny experience
- A strong connection between touch and vision
- High emotive responses such as 'weird', 'freaky', 'strange' and 'fun'
- A strong disruption in proprioception
- A hyper-real experience
- Experiencing more of the self
- A link between an excess of self and the Lacanian real
- A link between the uncanny and the Lacanian real
- A link between the uncanny and experiencing more of self

In *In[bodi]mental* informants and myself were caught between doubt and certainty during the intersection and alignment of this body swapping exploration. There were expressions of disbelief and belief in 'whose body was who's'. The notable difference with this I-RE compared to I-REs I-III was the hyper-real experiences informants expressed. The following are some quotes taken from those experiences.

I felt I was my mum and my mum was me...it was most effective when we had the little hand ball" "I believe your hands are mine ..." *"Whenever I moved she copied...I felt like I was her ..."* *"It was a weird good experience ... it was quite convincing that it was my body (my dad's that is). It was more convincing my dad's body was on me when we stood up and rubbed stomachs...it was very weird"* *"...after a while you try to synchronise yourself and match the action intuitively...I feel the more immersive*

the experience I think the body can be tricked into believing the other body is yours
(2011, Appendix 1, p.173).¹³⁹

These findings indicate that the self was momentarily immersed in the other. There are no indications that self was lost to the other, on the contrary, through immersion the self experienced more of self in the other. For brief moments informants believed they had ownership of the other body. Though some of these findings relate to I-REs I-III it has been through the HMDs that the real-time video technology has been able to suspend the self in the digital counterpart. During my own experiences of *In[bodi]mental* I believed the other person's body was my own. In the early experimental stages of this I-RE the following is an account of my first response.

I really did feel that her hand and legs where mine especially when our movements where synchronized. Danielle started drawing with a pen on her hand and I believed she was drawing on my hand and that was weird for me. I poured hand cream into my hands and rubbed it in. I asked Danielle to copy my actions and she said she really felt the cream on her hands even though the cream was in fact on my hands
(2011 Appendix 1, p.174).¹⁴⁰

We might say that these experiences correlate to being in a state between substance and non-substance. This corresponds neatly to the Siberian Yukaghirs discussed in chapter one, when they go hunting for their Elk. Here Rane Willerslev describes the way in which these hunters occupy a 'betwixt' place between a state of substance and non-substance, between animal and hunter that assists in the similitude of sameness and difference (Willerslev 2007, p.30).¹⁴¹ As an imitator, the self can enter into relations with its other without being transformed into something else or losing itself within the other. Without the mediation of the self through the other there would be no conception of self as such. The imitator can be in contact

with the world of other bodies, things and people and also separate himself from them by forcing himself to reflexively turn in on himself (2007, p.26).¹⁴²

In *In[bodi]mental* informants reported a suspended belief in the other body image as their own, which was reinforced through imitating the digital counterpart. This is where the physical body was performing the other while maintaining its sameness and difference. This awareness of imitating the other prevents us from fusing with the object of difference. This is something Jungian psychoanalyst Mark Saban describes as the psychology of mimesis which is a state that is neither cut off in difference nor fused with sameness. Saban refers to the concept of mimesis as a similarity which always depends for meaning on its opposite 'difference'. 'It is this awareness of difference that enables the imitator's direction of attention ... to turn back into self- awareness as imitating subject' (Saban: 2010).¹⁴³ The conception between the physical body and its digital counterpart in *In[bodi]mental* assists the body to perceptually transpose itself from physical self to other self mediated through the process of imitation and the digital technology.

In refraining from speaking whilst experiencing *In[bodi]mental* we can come to suspend our separation between our corporeal self and digital other. Insofar as we abstain from using the symbolic order of language whose principle function is to differentiate and divide. Through withholding language and mimetically incorporating the digital other into the self we come to experience a duality of doubling perspectives where each is reflected in the other, emphasizing the similitude between self and other. In this instance it is the technology that has augmented this emphasis. Throughout our day-to-day interactions with each other we are unaware of our inherent desire to mimic others in the actual world. In the process of mimicking the other through the real-time HMDs the digital image folds back into and changes

the actual perception of the corporeality of the self. We are so caught up in the others' image and actions they become mutually related.

3:3 In[bodied] selves ∞ :the 'live chiasm' of the actual body and the digital other

Merleau-Ponty's concept of the chiasm discussed in chapter one has been exemplified through *In[bodi]mental* where the actual body and its digital counterpart intersect. I refer to this as a 'live chiasm' which we experience in the moment of *In[bodi]mental*. It is through the alignment of body matter and digital media that we experience the relationship between the visible and the tangible. The chiasm has become a lived experience beyond the parameters of philosophical discourse channelled through the HMDs. *In[bodi]mental* is an experience which conveys Merleau-Ponty's claim that there are no limits between the body and the world, self and other as the world is flesh. Indeed we are both subject and object simultaneously where our 'flesh' merges with the flesh that is the world (Merleau-Ponty 1968, p.138).¹⁴⁴

I propose that any claim of the binary self/other division between the lived body and the digital other, has become a learnt perception from our fixed optical viewpoint of the world. In other words, as we see the visual image outside our corporeality we assume we have no connection with it. Furthermore because we do not see the chiasm we assume it is not there. This unassuming quality of the chiasm indicates we are unaware of our entwinement with other subjects and the world. Conversely it is the real-time technologies that has magnified this process where we experience these crossovers and learn new ways of seeing and experiencing the world. In seeing-ourselves see-ourselves through the eyes of the other our pre-conditioned relationship with self and the world is challenged. While we are able to shift our perspective through the digital technology, we have the potential to step into the

digital counterpart and become a part of our other as a part of self. The crossover of the live video feed within the HMDs has been the stepping-stone in assisting in these shared realities. *In[bodi]mental* enables us to feel we are *in* the [body] of another. I have coined the term In[body] to express these forms of experience where one perceives that they are situated inside another's body. The term is defined as being inside another body through these interactions where you choose to step into it. Whereas, the term embodiment uses the pre-fix en/m meaning *into* which is more about becoming embodied where you bring something into the body. Here the subject and object are different where the subject acts upon the object. The difference between in[body] and embody is significant in that *being* in the body is different from *becoming* the body of another. If we actually become another body what would happen to the self? We don't lose the self in these interactions. On the contrary, it is by simulating the digital counterpart that this In[bodi]ment has been realised as an excess of self. This is where we have gained something more of the self in the other – an augmentation of the self via technology through the other. This experience may potentially be more real than the self we know. This hyperreality is something Merleau-Ponty might have taken to mean in the following quote:

...as upon two mirrors facing one another where two indefinite series of images set in one another arise which belong really to neither of the two surfaces, since each is only the rejoinder of the other, and which therefore form a couple, a couple more real than either of them (Merleau-Ponty 1968, p.138).¹⁴⁵

In *In[bodi]mental* we experience the tangibility of the 'live chiasm' as a form of In[bodi]ment in the other. It re [presents] the chiasmus as a mobius strip ∞ where this figure of eight subverts our normal way of representing space. It does this by aligning the digital and the actual through synchronicity. The in[bodi]ment of two selves

appear as 'one' when in reality there are two individual subjects. The HMDs facilitated a perceived traversal of each participant's corporeality where the technology enabled us to experience one continuum where it is impossible to locate the cross over between the inside and outside, self and other. This type of digital technology extended our vision and touch acting as the interface between the actual body and its digital counterpart where vision dominates proprioception.

3:4 The In[bodied] Mirror Stage

Whilst we are suspended in *In[bodi]mental* we return to a new Lacanian MS where we have entered the stage as non-speaking subjects. As non-speaking subjects we abstain from speaking in language, and are mimetically engrossed being captive in the digital image of the other. It is during this In[bodi]ment that the experience is uncanny. This is the place where we have forgotten our own body and shifted into that of another, where we are suspended in a 'betwixt' place between substance and non-substance, between the conscious and the subconscious. In *The Uncanny* (1919)¹⁴⁶ Freud often refers to an unintentional return to something that was once familiar and now estranged and repressed. Experiencing *In[bodi]mental* suggests that we may have returned to 'something' familiar within the digital counterpart understood as unfamiliar 'as other', which has now become a part of self through the synchronized movement.

In the experience of *In[bodi]mental* we actually gain something more of self in the digital image. Therefore it is significant to return back to the Lacanian MS where the child passes from the MS to the symbolic world of language as an individual subject. *In[bodi]mental* reverses Lacan's MS where we enter as subjects and maintain a suspension in his imaginary. It is while we are immersed and captivated in the image that any gap between subjects is overcome. In doing so a disruption in the

proprioception of the body had caused a heightened awareness of the body in the moment creating a stronger unity with the image. While the real is lost during Lacan's MS *In[bodi]mental* enables us to experience something of the lost real phenomenologically. As a form of experience which cannot be articulated in language I regard the uncanny experience in *In[bodi]mental* as a re-connection with the lost real.

3:5 The Uncanny as the remainder of the lost real

We know the uncanny is an experience which we cannot articulate in words. This is also true of Lacan's real as it cannot be named. Freud also points out that we tend to relate to the uncanny when our boundaries between reality and fantasy are blurred. These boundaries are not so much blurred in *In[bodi]mental* but sustained in the 'betwixt' space between substance and non-substance. While we are suspended in the imaginary *In[bodi]mental* enables us to prolong our experience in the reality of the digital counterpart. It is at this moment the digital counterpart is experienced as part of self. This real experience advanced the research.

It became apparent that Lacan's real was experienced during this exploration but was caught up via the uncanny. Though an 'uncanniness' was induced when the digital counterpart was experienced as part of their self, I claim that the uncanny experiences in *In[bodi]mental* did not arise out of some repressed childhood complexities revived within the performance. Nor was it a revival of a primitive belief system. I argue that it is from a much deeper primordial connection that enables us to go beyond the symbolic world of language with a shared empathy of experience mediated through the technology. We are reconnecting with something that was familiar and lost and nothing to do with being hidden or repressed. This is not a return to something repressed but to something lost or long forgotten – Lacan's real.

I state that we can experience the real phenomenologically through an uncanniness which cannot be expressed in words. This uncanniness is understood as an exciting strangeness rather than a frightening encounter where we are connecting with something lost but found in the other.

This can be explained through a shared reality between informants. Those who took part in *In[bodi]mental* felt an intuitive urge to continue copying each others' movements once instructions had been given. Some led the other without instructions. In all of the I-REs there was an instinctive urge to mimic and/or synchronize oneself with the digital counterpart. As discussed in chapter one this process of repetition is tantamount with the uncanny and the real. We know repetition for Freud is an unintentional return, whereas for Lacan it is a missed encounter with the real. I am claiming that our desire to mimic in *In[bodi]mental* is a direct instinctual response in an attempt to access the real in the other. In doing, so we return to the lost real encountered through the uncanny experience. I therefore argue that the uncanny experience may be a remainder of the lost real, accessed through other, as self in the digital counterpart. What we have lost in the subject in Lacan's MS is rediscovered in the other augmented through the new technologies as a form of direct experience. In this way we experience a reality of the self 'more real' together in *In[bodi]mental* than we could ever experience on our own. The impact this has on subjects has been equated with a disturbance in the human psyche rather than a traumatic experience.

3:6 The Augmented Self: Performing the real through the other self using real-time video technologies

According to Lacan the real is impossible to think or to verbalize. However what I am arguing is that we can take another approach to experiencing it. This is not to

suggest a division between language and experience but to consider them both occurring simultaneously where we can find new frameworks to experience them. The *In[bodi]mental* exploration has been formulating new ways with technology to experience the real phenomenologically through digital performance. In doing so, it can explore the gaps within the symbolic between language and experience. It does this through the augmented self which has come about through the In[bodi]ment of two corporeal selves reversed through the HMDs. The augmented self in this case provides a platform for the crossover between the symbolic world of language and the experience of the real, which can only be accessed through the imaginary in *In[bodi]mental*. This 'live chiasm' at the intersection between the symbolic and the real has developed a growth in lived experience which has had a profound impact on ones perception of self. Just like the (gametes) of a human cell where we divide-unite-divide, *In[bodi]mental* mirrors those behaviours through its potential to perceptually shift the subject from its place of standing in the world to unite with the digital counterpart and back again. On its return the subject has gained more of itself through the other. The crossing over of the live video feed through the HMDs has disturbed the reality we have been familiar with, which has now been undermined to the point where we may be experiencing a reality that is more real than the self we have come to know. Furthermore this may be compounded through the instinctual desire to synchronize and mimic the digital counterpart, to where we are performing this other. Not only do we come to empathize with the image as our own we have come to observe how it feels to move like the digital counterpart and identify with it as part of our self

It makes sense that the correlation between self-objectification and In[bodi]ment is focused on the ability to observe oneself reflexively. Willerslev observes how our

bodies invite objectification to gain a sense of the other as part of self. By incorporating the performative mimetic image of another, the body can occupy both states of the self/other experience where we can perform the other. In essence this takes us back to the Yukaghirs when they go hunting for Elk where they take on the qualities of the Elk to catch their prey. However while we take on the mimetic qualities of the digital counterpart in *In[bodi]mental* we have the ability to amplify the body as an external object where one observes oneself reflexively from the viewpoint of another; which I am suggesting creates a stronger empathy with the other subject as part of self. Here the materiality of the body has been stretched through a deliberate disturbance in the proprioception of the body.

3:7 Technology as the Looking Glass Self

As we interact with emerging technology the more they are becoming the interface of the looking glass self. They are enabling us to reflect on ourselves from many viewpoints and the way others see us. This has been exemplified through the software Isadora which has the ability to project and manipulate real-time video images. Using Isadora has enabled the boundaries between the corporeal self and the digital other to become blurred. *In[bodi]mental* for example has enabled us to empathize with others and experience the digital other as a component of self. These emerging technologies are breaking down the illusion of the digital other as a separate entity. Artists, scientists and theorists are witnessing the augmentation of the self mediated through digital technologies. Digital media art practices are having an impact on our perception of reality especially our assumed assumptions that self and digital other, subject and objects are somehow separate alien entities. In essence we cannot get outside technology; we are a part of the technology.

The artistic process of practitioners has been challenged when using new technologies within an art and performance emphasis. Just like any other medium within the field of Fine Art and/or Art and Design the tools have challenged the making process. The methods and approaches that result from those challenges have been evidenced within *In[bodi]mental* where the technology is the device which has caused the body to feel In[bodied] to another. Though the technology has inevitably been a part of the making process of the art practice it has been during this research that the concepts and ideas came first which required the HMDs to make the work happen. Nonetheless the technology has also pushed the concepts within this research and expanded the art practice as the method and the method as the practice. *In[bodi]mental* has been transparent in bridging the gap between the making and the process where these fields have come together to make artwork.

Moreover the technology had also become the looking glass to communicate the personal journey this research has undertaken through the work phenomenologically and reflexively. The journey has not been pure philosophy but not pure technically, but an engagement of them both to enable the conceptual processes to emerge through the artists multiplicity of roles viewpoints and vocabularies to work across disciplines such as art and technology. These personal experiences have become a part of the making process, in such a way that, using the technology is as important as the outcome which has contributed to new knowledge. If we understand that we cannot get outside technology as we are so much a part of it, then we also understand we cannot take the self out of the making processes attached to practice led research. Rather than just focusing on methodological frameworks the working process point of view can also helps artists become researchers and still maintain artistic integrity.

Using the tools of emerging technologies to re-examine the self as a form of self reflection blurs the boundaries between the artist and the artefact. The capability of real-time technology within the field of video performance demonstrates the way the self bleeds into the technology. Inevitably this will impact upon the way artists approach self-portraits, and the way observers interact with an image. An original aspect of this research is the way we can *In[body]* the image. Using *Isadora* has enabled one to feel they have inhabited the body of another as a new experience which we did not have a phrase for, until now. The alignment between the digital and the corporeal has created a digital circuit to enable a crossover between the actual and the digital. Therefore body matter and digital media are part of the materiality of the body. Without the affordances of the digital technology the *in[bodied]* experience would not be possible to stretch the body beyond its normal parameters. The notion of *in[body]*ing oneself or another subject through technology is a way forward to experience the real through digital performance.

3:8 *In[bodi]mental*: The intersection between neurology and phenomenology

It has been through the technology that the subject's lived experience has been heightened through our visual perceptions which creates our reality in *In[bodi]mental*. In the 1990s neurologist Vilayanur Ramachandran devised mirror therapy for phantom limb pain sufferers. During an online interview Ramachandran claims that if a mirror is placed to reflect the existing limb in a position that makes it look like the missing one, the brain's distorted image of the phantom can be changed. "When the amputee moves the existing limb into a comfortable position, the reflection in the mirror — the phantom limb — "moves" with it, and pain in that missing limb often disappears, sometimes forever". *Time Health & Family*, 'Unlearning' Pain (Maia Szalavitz 2011).¹⁴⁷

In a related study, a team of Swedish neuroscientists demonstrated that human subjects can be made to experience virtual bodies as their own in the form of body swapping experiments. Volunteers at Stockholm's Karolinska Institute wore VR goggles to experience the illusion of swapping bodies with a mannequin and a real person.

Manipulation of the visual perspective, in combination with the receipt of correlated multisensory information from the body was sufficient to trigger the illusion that another person's body or an artificial body was one's own. This effect was so strong that people could experience being in another person's body when facing their own body and shaking hands with it (Henrik Ehrsson & Valerie Petkova 2008).¹⁴⁸

These experiments consisted of subjects being subjected to synchronized visual and tactile stimulation. To create the illusion scientists fitted two CCTV cameras onto the head of a male mannequin and sent the output from the camera to two small screens in front of the subjects' eyes. When the mannequin and the subject's head were looking down towards their own torso, the subject saw the mannequin's body where they would have normally seen their own. Ehrsson's work has built on previous experiments known as the "rubber hand illusion" in which participants were manipulated to experience a rubber hand as their own. Ehrsson comments that:

...this shows how easy it is to change the brain's perception of the physical self... By manipulating sensory impressions, it's possible to fool the self not only out of its body but into other bodies, too¹⁴⁹(Ehrsson cited in Helen Thompson, NewScientist 2008).

According to these neuroscientists we can fool the brain into believing that we can experience another limb or another person's body as our own. The ramifications of these findings resonate with the debate surrounding Mirror Neurons in the field of neuroscience. For Ramachandran there is a direct correlation between mirror

neurons and pain-relief. He claims that if a phantom limb patient watches another patient being scratched or touched they feel the touch in their own phantom limb. In his paper *Self Awareness: The Last Frontier* (2009, p.3)¹⁵⁰ he identifies with 'touch mirror neurons' (2009:4)¹⁵¹ that fire not only when your own skin is touched but also when you watch someone else being touched. He speculates that we can experience the touch of the other just by observing it, like a simulation.

It's as if the neuron ...was using the visual input to do a sort of 'virtual reality simulation' of the other persons actions – allowing you to empathize with her and view the world from her point of view (Ramachandran 2009, p.4).¹⁵²

Though mirror neurons have been described as the most hyped concept of neuroscience Ramachandran goes one step further and sees mirror neurons as the driving force behind what makes us human. (Jarrett 2012).¹⁵³

Though Ramachandran may be regarded as sensationalist in their paper *Reflections on the Mirror Neuron System: Their Evolutionary Functions Beyond Motor Representation* (2009) by Lindsay M. Oberman and Ramachandran they "Suggest that mirror neurons fundamentally mediate the mapping of one dimension or representation in a brain map onto a completely different dimension" (2009, p.41).¹⁵⁴

These are interesting propositions that have been experienced in *In[bodi]mental* through the crossover of live video feeds in the HMDs. Furthermore the findings have indicated that subjects did experience the digital counterpart as part of their own corporeality and the mapping of one body had been transposed through the technology to another. Though there is no empirical evidence I am speculating there may be a direct correlation between mirror neurons and the technology which could account for the experience of the *In[bodi]ment* of the other were we come close to

performing the phenomenology of the other. Through synchronised movement and the ability of the technology to enable one to see through the eyes of the other there is a heightened reciprocity of self-awareness and other awareness.

In their paper *From Embodied representations to Co-regulation* (2009) Gun R. Semin and John, T. Cacioppo explore social cognition between subjects. They recognise that social cognition does not consist of passive experiences of observing another perform an action; and nor is it equivalent to 'becoming another self' it is a process that unfolds between two or more agents. They define synchronization as "*jointly and simultaneously recruited sensory motor processes that are evident in a neurophysiological mirroring of the producer by the perceiver*". (G.R. Semin and J.T. Cacioppo 2009, p.113).¹⁵⁵ Furthermore they claim that these:

Synchronized processes link two or more human agents putting them on a similar footing... it is jointly recruited processes with overlapping 'identities' that facilitates understanding (co-cogitation) and adaptive co-action (co-regulation) between two or more individuals... what counts for the one member may not have initially counted for the other but through interaction these two become synchronized to approach being on the same page – that is, for what counts for one individual also counting for the other (G.R. Semin and J. T. Cacioppo 2009, p.114).¹⁵⁶

They also ask the question, does one become the self? They claim that synchronization 'alone' does not lead to complete equivalence between self and other. Instead synchronization promotes partial and not full correspondence between subjects.

In the 1960s when Merleau-Ponty was writing his work on the chiasm the Neuroscientists had not come across the existence of the mirror neurons. However

what is remarkable is the way neuroscience has made the connection that appears to make a stronger claim that when we simulate the other there may be evidence of a neural crossover between subjects. In other words we may be able to come to a point where we can see the connection between two subjects by their neural brain patterns which may have the same patterns of neural activity and potentially mirror each others' experiences in *In[bodi]mental*.

When we consider the stretching of the material body within this practice-led research we can draw on the Merleau-Ponty's philosophical relationship between the visible and the tangible belonging to the same world. He understood there were no boundaries between the self and the world – the world is flesh where we touch and feel with our eyes. Though my findings are based on phenomenological experiences where informants have felt the digital counterpart as part of self; the research needs to look towards science to seek evidence of In[body]ing another subject. According to Ehrsson & Petkova we can fool the self out of it's own body and into another. For Ramachandran just by observing we can experience the touch of the other through touch mirror neurons and as for Semin and Cacioppo we can through synchronized interaction experience 'being on the same page'. The impact mirror neurons have on the constitution of self is also shared by Oberman and Ramachandran when they submit 'that 'mirror neurons' play a large role in our social evolution including the development of culture and the development of self' (2009, p.41).¹⁵⁷ Though this is a big claim there may be some grounding in mirror neurons and our understanding of what constitutes the self.

To undertake further empirical research to evidence if there is in fact a sharing of the same experience between subjects and the impact this has on the self there needs to be more collaborations between neurology, psychiatry, social science and video

performance practice. A step forward could be through neural brain maps that may draw correlations between subjects and their experiences.

The sharing of emotive and cognitive experiences is currently being explored by filmmaker and researcher Pia Tikka's project. NeuroCine (2009-2014)¹⁵⁸. This research is being conducted in the framework of a neuroscience project aivoAALTO at Aalto University Finland. The research looks for new insights to the intersubjectively shared functions of the human brain. It is a multi-disciplinary team combining methods and approaches of cinema and cognitive neurosciences. The aim of the project is to unravel the neural basis of filmmakers creative imagination and to examine to what extent subjects share emotive-cognitive experiences while viewing films. Also using advanced data-analysis methods allows quantifying similarities between brain signals of subjects perceiving narrative stimuli of cinema-scale durations. In addition the project Neurofiction developed by Finnish author of science fiction and fantasy, Hannu Rajaniemi and mathematician and engineer, Samuel Halliday explore the two way process of the reading brain and the text. The electrical activity of neurons is captured using an electroencephalography headset. Using algorithm that learns what themes and elements engage each reader, the neurofiction engine turns this data into a unique path through the story. The reader alters the story by being guided to one of the multiple possible endings or to explore a new region of the story space.

Exploring shared experiences between subjects is an exciting prospect to develop a deeper understanding of the self. According to Ramachandran the fine line between subjects is "...a sobering thought that the only barrier between you and others is your skin receptors' ... 'despite all the pride that your self takes in its individuality and privacy, the only

thing that separates you from me is a small subset of neural circuits in your frontal lobes interacting with mirror neurons” (Ramachandran 2009, p.4).¹⁵⁹

Rather than approaching the self as a unitary self the findings from I-RE IV reveal it is through the experience of *In[bodi]mental* that we can focus on components of the self of the other, to find ways to perform the other self and experience these elements as part of our own corporeality. If self can be defined as a composite of individual components then a component of my self is reflected in the digital other and vice versa. If the neurons enable us to adopt an empathy with another, and enable us to simulate their experience, then self and the world as we know it are indeed entwined much more than we think.

*The enigma is that my body simultaneously sees and is seen. That which looks at all things can also look at itself and recognize, in what it sees, the ‘other side’ of its power of looking. It sees itself seeing; it touches itself touching; it is visible and sensitive for itself. It is not a self through transparency like thought which only thinks its object by assimilating it...by transforming it into thought. It is a self through confusion... -a self, therefore, that is caught up in things, that has a front and a back, a past and a future ... (Merleau-Ponty 1964, pp.162-3).*¹⁶⁰

If we can simulate experiences by observing, then what happens when we immerse ourselves within that simulation through live video interaction? What happens when the sensory input of the performance, through, technology, image, light, shadow, touch, and sound etc feeds back into and changes the motor output of the physical body? These considerations can only be measured through empirical enquiry which may lead these investigations in the direction of post doctoral research. If we evolve through knowledge production then our compulsion to reproduce ourselves by

simulating the behaviours of others may be an unconscious attempt to inhabit a part of the self in another.

Understanding what happens between subjects resonates with Roy Ascott, a pioneer in telematic art and a seminal theorist in the field of new media art. In *Syncretic Reality; art, process, and potentiality* (2005) Ascott discusses the impact new media art has on our reality and the way 'syncretic reality' is both construed and constructed by new media art practice. The syncretic is articulated as distinct to binary oppositions described by Ascott as "a process between different elements, the in-between condition of 'being both'..." "In the syncretic context, extreme differences are upheld but aligned' in such a way 'that likeness is found amongst unlike things' were 'the power of each element' enriches 'the power of all others within the array of their differences". (Ascott 2005, p.1)¹⁶¹ Ascott's syncretic has been evidenced in *In[bodi]mental* where we find ourselves immersed within the digital counterpart and experience the other as part of self. We did not meld into a homogenous whole losing our individuality we experienced more of us in the other while retaining our own sense of self – a composite self, augmented and mediated through the HMDs. Not only does the self distribute itself through telematic networks according to Ascott it is an evolutionary development towards the multiple self – a 'multiplicity not just of (virtual/cyborg) bodies but of attitudes, values, intentions and purposes' (2005, p.9).¹⁶² Viewing the self from this perspective we may be able to understand how aspects of the self can move from person to person.

The notion of the self moving from person to person is articulated by writers and architects Robert Sumrell and Kazys Varnelis in their book *Blue Mondays: Stories of Absurd Realities and Natural Philosophies* (2007). "In order to function within contemporary cities we have all become human chameleons without a sense of home.

Beyond merely moving from place to place, we move from self to self according to the social conditions we find ourselves in" (Sumrell & Varnelis 2007, p. 144).¹⁶³ Rather than moving from place to place it is through social networking that we can move from self to self depending on the construction of self we choose to simulate. We can change our identity within these parameters. However in *In[bodi]mental* we inhabit something of the self of the other in both mind and body where we share our intersubjectivities. Perhaps when we do feel the experience of the uncanny between each other it may be the moment when we are experiencing an embodied shift from one self to another – the *Unheimliche* (the *unhomely*). According to Ascott it is habit forming which is the enemy of art which impedes the search for new ways of being, while conversely, the syncretic process is an assault on habit. Using new video technology has enabled us to break learnt habits of our own selfhood and assist in our ability to experience more of self. In *In[bodi]mental* I can perform a part of the other self which is also part of me. We experience this as a 'live chiasm' – a tangibility of the other-self channelled through the HMD which satisfies our infinite process to reproduce ourselves through the other.

The binary divisions between self/other, subject and object have been temporarily suspended in *In[bodi]mental* where each is implicated in the other. In the future the 'mixing together' of the actual self and the digital will inevitably contribute to our understanding of the composite self through mixed-reality technology where the awareness of a syncretic self (the in-between condition of being both self and other) may become the norm of our experience.

3:9 Reflecting on *In[bodi]mental*

The findings in this chapter have been revealing the way in which the actual body phenomenologically experiences an *In[bodi]ment* of its digital counterpart through

the I-RE *In[bodi]mental*. These experiences can be articulated as three phases which contributes to the body's ability to shift from its place of standing into the digital image and return back to the body:

- Phase one is a process of 'opening one's body' up to focus on touch and vision through the HMD. By abstaining from using language and acting as a 'non-speaking' subject the focus of concentration on these senses induces the experience of immersion. By removing the peripheral vision of each informant through the HMD the notion of a separation between informants is reduced. Through the crossover of the live video feed within the HMDs informants have been experiencing a suspension within the digital counterpart of the other. This has been articulated as a 'live chiasmic' processes where vision supersedes proprioception and we enter a new Lacanian MS where we are trapped in the imaginary world of images, reflections and doubles.
- In phase two, one performs the other through mimetically incorporating the movements of the other as part of your own. In doing so the other becomes a part of self. During those moments of synchronization between the digital counterparts we are suspended in the imaginary world of the image. During this alignment there is crossover between the conscious and the subconscious where we forget this body and experience another. This real-time composite image is experienced as an excess of self which induces the experience of the uncanny. This is a return to something of the self rediscovered in the other, ie the lost real. The uncanny is the trigger that accesses the remainder of the lost real encountered in *In[bodi]mental*. These two phases enable the body

to perform the real phenomenologically. The inter-corporeality of one self is caught up in another self which cannot be accessed without the mediation of the real-time video through the HMDs.

- Phase three sees the return of the body back to its assumed corporeality. The awareness of this return has disrupted our learnt habits of behaviour and perception to experience new aspects of the self in the digital other. The transformation in the cycle from the 'me' 'me-not-me' to 'me+' is complete. A fragment of the other self is transposed through the HMD and becomes a part of the subject and her/his selfhood.

These three phases alter our preconceived perception of self as one whole enclosed unit of a subject's corporeality which is perceived as divided from the self of others. What *In[bodi]mental* does is to enable us to shift into the other which becomes a component of self. The 'live chiasm' is evidencing an inter-corporeality of both subjects where the tangible and the visible interrelate and allowing us to experience Willerslev's 'betwixt' state between substance and non-substance. These In[bodied] selves ∞ are experienced as a form of concrete experience. This is a In[bodied] network that is a return to the MS where both informants are trapped within the imaginary suspending any notion of a division between them.

If our inner compulsion to repeat and the desire to reproduce ourselves as image is a missed encounter with the real then perhaps by simulating the behaviour of others it may be an unconscious desire to inhabit a part of our self in the other to access the real. Perhaps through more simulation we may be able to encounter more of the Lacanian lost real. A connection to a primordial part of self which has come about through the In[bodiment] of the other .

Conclusion

This thesis has been structured into three main chapters. Chapter one explored the theoretical binary self/other divisions in the work of Jacques Lacan, Drew Leder, Maurice-Merleau-Ponty, and Rane Willerslev. Chapter two explained the mixed-method approach applied auto-ethnophenomenology. This method was significant in capturing informants' lived experiences from the viewpoint of both the 'I' and the 'other' through four Inter-Reactive Explorations I-REs. Thereafter chapters one and two drew together the theory and the practice in a contribution to new knowledge discussed in chapter three.

In the field of video performance the main research question focused on the impact digital performance has on the subject's perception of reality through the phenomenology of the digital other, questioning what this interaction may suggest about the other and our perception of self. The research began with a simplistic notion of the self as a whole bounded unit of one single self. As a result of this study the main findings have revealed a shift in understanding of the self as one single unit. Instead we have witnessed many components of self which include the digital counterpart where we become composite selves. Digital performance has enabled us to understand how we can perform the other through mimesis to consider the way our desire to mimic the other enables the subject to take on board elements of the digital other as part of self.

New knowledge

The new knowledge contributed from this research has been that of experiencing the digital other as a part of self augmented through real-time video technology – the augmented self. What has made this research original is the way we can stretch the

materiality of the body and in[body] the real-time video image as a component of self. What has contributed to this phenomenon is a deliberate shift in the proprioception of the body. In building on this claim this thesis has demonstrated that one can [step into] the digital counterpart through digital performance and In[body] the other subject. Moreover the experience of this In[bodi]ment has induced an uncanny experience were one has compared it to the Lacanian real. In other words it is through the uncanny we can experience the real where we access more of the self in the other. These findings are summarized in the following points.

- In the first instance the research uncovered that the digital counterpart is not other to the self but a component of self augmented through the real-time technology.

This has come about through a disturbance in the experience between the subject and its reality through a disruption of the proprioception of the body. The real-time video technologies enabled an expansion of an individual's perception of reality to include previously undetected components of self through the digital counterpart

- Secondly that the uncanny experience is a reminder of the lost real re-discovered through the embodiment of the digital counterpart. It is a primordial part of our self that we re-experience in the other.

The outcome of this research process has revealed that one can encounter more of the self in the other digital counterpart understood as an excess of self mediated through new video technologies. The following four key questions implemented in chapter two provided a framework to unravel the main thesis question as a contribution to new knowledge through video-performance practice:

1. Using video projection technologies can we unite with the digital video image as other and become one?

The rationale for I-RE (i) explored whether we have the potential to perceptually step out of the physical body and step into the digital other through one to one video performance.

2. Does the digital other have an emotional impact on the self? Can we challenge the impact emotional responses may have on the alienation between self and other

I-RE (ii) was looking for an emotional connection between the subject and the digital video image to determine if subjects did indeed feel alienated from their self image. This was reinforced through using a real-time video programme Isadora to enable subjects to step into their image.

3. Do we alternate between the physical self and the digital non-self to get to know more of the self; and is this oscillation an uncanny experience?

I-RE (iii) explored the embodiment of the subject to the digital video image using both real-time and pre-recorded video. Through oscillating between self and other it the I-RE attempted to create an uncanny experience to reinforce the embodied experience.

4. Can new technological affordances now allow us to embody the self of another?

Finally I-RE (iv) *In[bodi]mental* challenged the material body through real-time video and HMDs to determine if we could experience the 'Inbodiment' of the other.

Despite the success or teething problems associated with each of the key questions their implementation through video-performance practice invariably contributed to each other and the outcomes of this research.

The research has established the way real-time video technology has had a fundamental impact on the perception of self. The video programme Isadora enabled the viewer to transport the actual body into the digital counterpart and back again to expand an individual's perception of reality. For the first time we were able to see ourselves from the viewpoint of the other. This was due to the real-time capability of the video programme and the HMDs. In I-REs I-III myself and informants immersed ourselves in our own digital image (as other) and also the digital image of others. The live element of the video technology was pertinent in shifting the perception of the body from one place to another causing a disruption in the proprioception of the body. A disturbance in the body's perceived boundary is what contributed to the experience of a hyperreality which could not be achieved using mainstream video technology. What's more, by using the real-time media manipulation programme Isadora via the HMDs, it was possible to suspend the body between the subject and their digital counterpart. Informants interacted with each other in the moment and became temporarily trapped within the image. Being immersed in the image is what enabled subjects to sustain the feeling of in[bod]y the other. Isadora assisted in the crossover between subjects and their digital image through the live morphing of digital bodies and live-video body swapping processes. When informants interacted with their image in real-time they became disoriented and disjointed from their actual bodies. The shift in perception made it possible to experience the stretching of the material body from impossible viewpoints.

The research advanced through the innovative way in which the HMDs were applied to explore the thesis question. The HMDs had become the looking glass which made the absence of self in the other most present when we could focus our direct experience through the lens of the technology. These tools had made it possible to go beyond signification as a form of experience to where we could experience the uncanny as analogous to Lacan's real. The findings from I-RE IV *In[bodi]mental* inverted the Lacanian MS where as subjects divided through language we did not lose the real but we momentarily accessed a transposition of the real in the other.

Though we can never return to the Lacanian pre-language stage of development Isadora simulated a Mirror Stage through a disruption in the proprioception of the body. The HMDs exaggerated the way the actual body could oscillate and rotate between self and image, and then return to the body, creating a heightened self-awareness – a hyperreal experience of the self which blurred the perceived boundaries between self and other. The HMDs removed the peripheral vision to which we were accustomed and 'opened the body up' to richer experiences as 'non-speaking subjects' where we could focus our attentions on the experience *in* the moment. Though we can never escape the signification of words, we can experience the lost real through the uncanny via a digital circuit and share our inter-corporeal realities. Though this research has focused on the lived experience which cannot be articulated through language the paradox of this research is that it is only through language that we are able to talk about the experience. Insofar as certain experiences have been difficult to describe they have been articulated through expressions such as 'wow', 'weird', 'strange' 'uncanny' etc that have been understood as an echo of the real. Language is a way of coming to terms with lack and loss which was proposed by Lacan. If we know that entering into language

provides security against the dissolution of the self, then we also know that by abstaining from speaking can enhance our senses and experiences and narrow the gap between self and other. When we overuse and rely on language we come to interpret the world mediated through signs and signifiers. If we focus more on direct experience where we abstain from speaking through oral dialogue and 'open up' the body to new experiences then perhaps we can overcome our perceived boundaries. *In[bodi]mental* has enabled us to go beyond the veil of language where we can communicate non-verbally and in[body] the other through the digital image. It is through these interactions that we have experienced an augmented self.

The research contributes to the field of video performance within digital media art practice. It does this by challenging our perception of the material body within digital video performance. *In[bodi]mental* extended the body beyond the parameters of its own limits where we have experienced the in[bodi]ment of another. Furthermore we have come to believe the other person's body as our own through touch through vision. These findings are advancing art practice by creating new encounters and relational experiences between actual bodies and their digital counterparts. Through phenomenology, embodiment and the experiential this research will continue to encounter digital art practice in new ways and raise new questions regarding the way we perceive the self and its constitution. Video performance within digital media practices will continue to challenge the material body and its reality.

Further Research

The research has evidenced that the digital counterpart is a component of the self mediated through technology. The impact this contribution to new knowledge will have on further research is to continue exploring what constitutes the self and the

role that real-time digital video technologies have on shaping the perception of self. Although a shared reflexive phenomenology between subjects has been an adequate approach for this research I envisage new developments between phenomenology, psychology and neuroscience. By turning to more scientific empirical enquiry to measure the extent subjects can share a phenomenology of one another, through emerging technologies, we may then be able to discover even more about the self.

To build on this research we need to develop partnerships between these disciplines through practice-led research. *In[bodi]mental* has proved that when we simulate another's actions we can experience an empathy with the digital image. We have discovered that through mimicry and synchronization channelled through the HMDs, informants have experienced a shared reality. Yet in sharing something of each other's reality mediated through digital art practice I see this leading us in new directions where we can learn more about the self and our relationship with the world.

The collaborative project *NeuroCine* (2011-2014) led by Pia Tikka and her research on enactive cinema is now coming to an end. Therefore we need to encourage more networks and collaborations between a variety of experts in the field of neuroscience, cinema, video-performance, psychology and emerging technologies to understand connections between subjects. Tikka's interest in enactive cinema has been focusing on the unconscious interaction between the cinema spectator and the cinema. While following the cinematic narrative, each spectator's heart rate, breathing and movements are continuously measured by the built in bio - sensors. The spectator's emotional experience is connected to the installation's real time emotional montage dynamics even without conscious attention on interaction. *NeuroCine* has developed these connections with collaborations between filmmakers

and neuroscientists to unravel the neural basis of filmmakers creative imagination, and to what extent subjects share emotive-cognitive experiences whilst watching films, and reading stories encountered in *Neurofiction*. It is these directions which will lead us to experience artworks empathetically.

I envisage developing this practice-led research through empirical enquiry to seek evidence of a shared phenomenology between subjects within digital video performance practice. This would involve collaborating with experts in the field of neuroscience and Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging FMRI, psychologists and computer engineers. Consequently, FMRI can be used to reveal brain structures and processes associated with perception, thought and action. Most FMRI scanners allow subjects to be presented with different visual images, sounds and touch stimuli. By developing real-time video performances, such as *In[bodi]mental*, which deliberately disrupted the proprioception of the body, FMRI's may be able to reveal a shared and/or similar neural activity happening in the brain. Using elements of synchronization and repetition may induce a shared mirror neuron activity to witness the elasticity of the material body. In attempts to Inbody one subject with another the culmination of emerging technologies may lead us to a deeper understanding of our connection with others and the extensible nature of being in the world. Collaborating with phenomenological methods and neuroscience are a means forward to understand the experience of others through lived experience and neuroimaging. Consequently by deliberately attempting to create uncanny experiences through one-to-one video performances we may find more ways to interpret experience which cannot be articulated through language.

If we can gather empirical evidence of the same neural brain patterns this could be the way forward to evidence the fact we are actually sharing the same state of mind.

Moreover it could lead to the notion that the self and consciousness is not just a single unit of experience but also a shared reality. If the sensory inputs of variables present within the digital performances disrupt the motor output of the proprioception of the body then it could intensify the embodied experience. If we can look towards the crossover between phenomenology and neuroscience we may be able to discover more about the self and the part technology plays in enabling us to In[body] the other. We already know we can experience the touch of the other simply by observing, and immersing ourselves in the other through visual simulation. Therefore it is so necessary that art practice should continue to address the embodiment of the other through interactive video. In this way we can then come to formulate a new understanding and empathy with our other as an expansion of self. So far this research journey has raised more questions regarding the reality of the material body as a single unit of corporeality were we believe we are the sole author of our own selfhood. This means we have expanded on our research regarding the actual and the digital self which has been understood as the in-between condition of being both – the syncretic self. The alignments between these modalities are narrowing through new digital media art practices, especially through digital performance which can temporarily overcome the divisions between language and experience, self and other.

Our intrinsic desire to reproduce ourselves through simulating the behaviours of others may well be an unconscious attempt to embrace a part of our self in the other. Nonetheless it has been through the looking glass of the digital technology, and human interaction, in the form of interactive video performance that has enabled this shared reality of phenomenological experience to take place. The tangibility of these

experiences satisfies our infinite process to reproduce ourselves through the other so any boundary between self and other is suspended.

This research has demonstrated that digital video performance practice can disrupt the conventional perceptions between subjects in the actual world as divided entities where we can share our realities through the medium of real-time video performance. We can go beyond the signification of words through a more direct route – the experience of being in the moment together to encounter the real in the other. By focusing on direct experience we have a deeper connection than language, which is realized through emerging technologies. Though Lacan views us as split subjects defined by language I argue that it is through digital performance practices that we can temporarily overcome those divisions if only for a moment.

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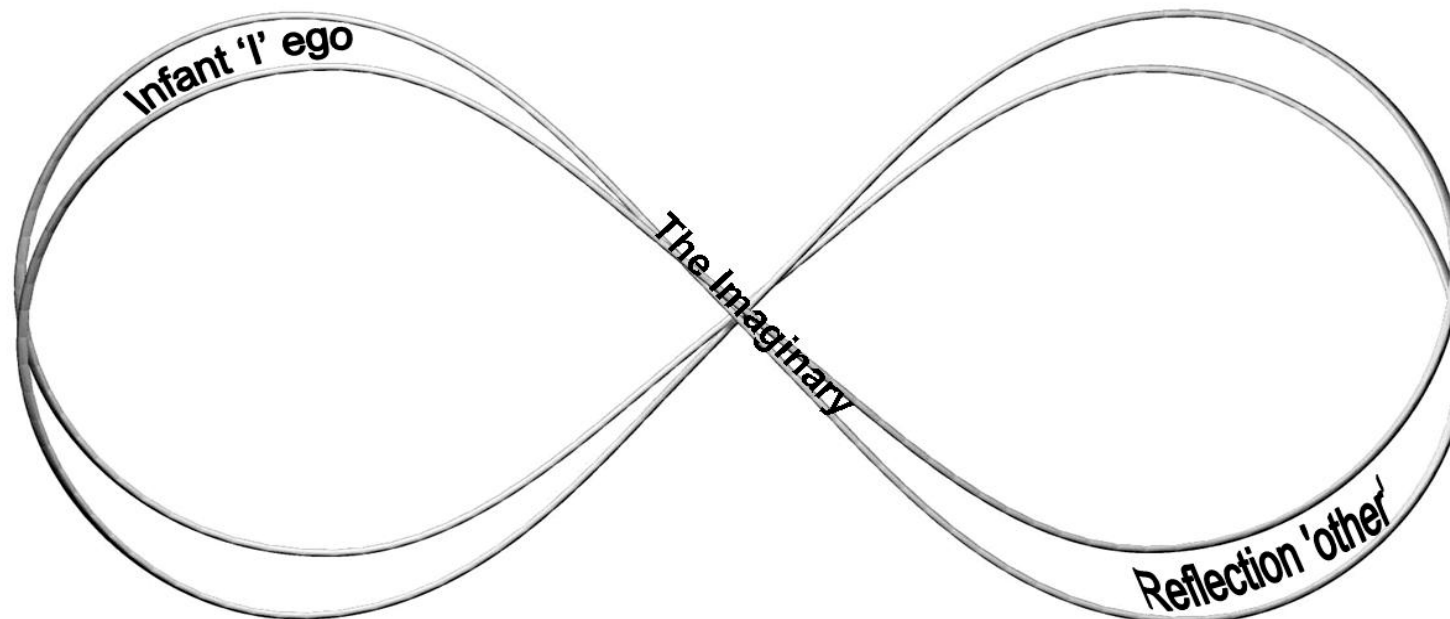
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Modelling The Moebius Strip in Practice-led Research Lacan's Mirror Stage



Lacan's Imaginary is a mode of being where there is no absolute distinction between the subject and the object. The self identifies with the world feeling within and apart from it so both seemingly move in and out of each other in a sealed circuit. This circuit is broken through language.

Lacan used the figure of the moebius strip to illustrate the way psychoanalysis problematises various binary oppositions, such as inside/outside, self/other, signifier/signified, truth/appearance. Lacan prefers to understand these oppositions in terms of the topology of the moebius strip. The opposed terms self and other are seen as continuous with each other. The symbol enables a traversal of these oppositions where they ceaselessly glide in and out of each other.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Extracts from Field Notes

Inter-Reactive Exploration I



Studio project I

"The script was trying to achieve an understanding of the Lacanian theory between self and other. I was trying to control the dynamic between me and my other. Using a script I wanted to try and get outside myself to experience the 'other'. I also wanted to put myself in the shoes of the digital other. I did not feel estranged from her. I felt like it was me and it wasn't me. Trying to remember the script distracted me interacting with my other. I felt 'home' in the experience but I think I felt more 'home' watching the video. Watching the video was stranger than performing it. Because I had a secondary source to look at (the laptop) I could focus more on the experience. The actuality of the experience felt 'home' but also I think I felt more embodied watching the video. Watching the video there are moments of union and an interactive relationship with each other where one is affected by the other. There are flickers of moments when you believe it's 'real' these two people are interacting and talking. When the digital body crossed my body I really could feel it. This is paradoxical because I felt a stronger feeling of embodiment when watching the video of the 2 Lorna's but experiencing it I really felt the shadow of the digital Lorna cross my body and that was amazing- I also felt embodied then too. "

Studio project ii



"It was exciting being involved without the script. This was when I did not have to think about the next line. I felt an overlaying of the digital body more by watching myself on the laptop as I could see the other Lorna crossing my body. BUT also my lived experience of doing it I felt more of the presence of the other Lorna when the light changed and I could feel the shadow. This is similar to when you're on the beach and someone gets in the way of the sun and creates a shadow on your body- you feel them"

"When recording the video of myself without the projection I had to imagine her in my mind's eye-see her. Pre-empt where she may be in the space or where she may go or what she may do. Now with her image I don't have to imagine I just see and feel her presence through the light and dark of the projected image passing over me, through me, into me. I hear the utterances of sound she has made during the recording – the noise of a foot or the sound of a hand clapping against the wall. These sounds are real and not imagined they have been captured by the video and they add to the ambiance of the presence of my 'other' self. Is this a part of me that has gone from a primordial time. Though the image is HIStoric now it is 'Real' "I move she moves. Sometime we moved in the same direction sometimes we moved apart but always looking for a point of reference in the 'other'. We began mimicking each other, copying each other and at times mirroring each other. The video image looks different from me, it looks solid and thinner. When the bodies collide or overlap you can see the transparency of the digital 'other' over the corporeal body. I felt comfortable with her in my own little world perhaps of a 'oneness' where my body extension is part and a[part] at one and the same time. I could materialize part of myself that was once just a passing action, a history gone forever. There I am my 'other' digital one caught in a moment of time with this time-now; playing together, communicating".

Studio Project iii



"The dancing was trying to get a balance between the other two pieces. The first one was scripted and the second one was where there was non verbal dialogue and totally improvised. This one is more choreographed and also improvised. The impact it had on my physical body was it worked in terms of me feeling embodied with her when we were doing synchronized movements together. I felt more embodied somehow. What did I understand about this experience? I think maybe it's the texture or surface of the wall where there is a surface to lean against. In this piece we come out more from the wall where the video projection and me I felt the dynamic distanced me from the digital Lorna. Maybe it's because the wall support is not there. When the scale is the same its more convincing rather than a really large image of yourself you don't feel anything when the large body goes across your body. It may be interesting to project on other surfaces".

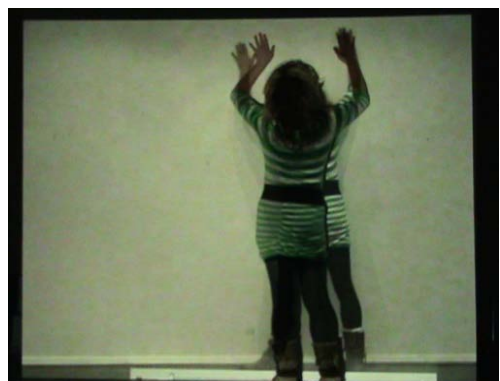
"When I am looking at the video documentation when I see the two Lorna's moving synchronously I feel its natural not weird, relaxed and even maybe a feeling of sameness or oneness. Is sameness the same as oneness? I am not sure. But when the bodies become more separate where each has a little personality of their own there seems to be a search for individuality and difference. There is a struggle between a striving for sameness and difference. This in itself is an oxymoron. Also there is a lot of balance going on between the two images. Also I am definitely following the movements of the projected image maybe because the projected image cannot follow me not unless it was perfectly scripted. I notice that I look more at the projected image than my physical body. When watching the synchronous movements it's like looking in a mirror at myself. There are definitely moments of fluidity where both bodies are moving together like a swan. This doubling in unison feels connected more, where arms and legs are floating in space almost identical."

Studio project iv



"When both Lorna's are crossing each other carrying a chair you can't really work out which one is the projection and which one is the flesh. However looking at the video they are both a projection. We have a projection of a projection and a projection of the flesh body. Watching the part of the video where both Lorna's place their legs on top of each other it's like looking at co-joined twins-one whole but two bodies. The relationship between the three bodies (the two digital Lorna's and the shadow of one Lorna) is interesting because you still focus on the projected Lorna and the shadow. The more flesh like Lorna you look at last. It would be really interesting to work with my shadow and see what happens. Looking at the shadow somehow it becomes of an individual, or maybe a separate being than the other flesh like Lorna. I think the shadow is more alien as there is no identity, but it is still comfortable. Sameness and difference seems to stand out more with the relationship between the shadow and the projected projected Lorna".

Studio project v



"I am looking at my documentation and describing what I see. Basically I am tracing myself...I am actually starting to copy the ghostly image of myself... to keep it synchronized. There was something beautiful about this experience. It's like tracing paper and trying to trace my own presence. When the digital image moved I moved. I was following her. Watching it gives me a real sense of immersion because...looking at it you can't work out the real image or the virtual... I really like that. I am scrolling across the wall... if this was a pencil I would be drawing around

myself. I am following her and the unity of both images is slightly off key...there are times when the two bodies are identical. It's almost synchronized...I do like the synchronicity of it...when the virtual image turns around so I can see myself from the front and the back at the same time...that's quite interesting it's like seeing yourself from a 360 degree angle I like that. When I was doing this I remember feeling the presence of the shadow so I was aware of the 'other' even though I could not see her...I could feel her and also feel her behind me, probably through the change in the light. Mimicry again is happening. The digital image is controlling the real image...and also the alter ego of the virtual image is much stronger here...there is much more of a personality coming through...she is very feisty. I really like the fact you can't tell which one is which the virtual and the actual"

Studio project vi



"I am going to describe what I am looking at. ...I think out of everything so far this is the weirdest experience I have had. I am speaking on the video and the actual body is miming...I am attracted to freaky...ok it looks a bit demonic...for some reason it's the weird and the uncanny. Are we closer to ourselves when it's weird or uncanny? I am totally fascinated by this one...is the image me? Yes and no...would I feel the same if it was someone else's face over mine...I don't know really. There is something strange about this. I know for Lacan the image would be the veil of the real...its like the dark side...again synchronicity seems to be cropping up. I would like to experiment with the pre-recorded voice coming out of the mouth...placing the virtual image over the real. It really does have an impact on me...it's weird. I could spend a long time immersed in myself ... I don't know. What would Freud or Lacan think of this? I did feel more embodied in this. The more synchronous the more embodied. Did it feel weird? Yeah I suppose it did. Do I see myself as different? Yeah it is different but there is something quite satisfying, exciting and strange about the whole experience really. It's like the tracing one trying to get my face to fit the digital face. I think maybe it would be interesting to have the face overlaid without movement perfectly to see how that feels. To look at it you would imagine it would feel more disembodied but in fact it felt more embodied".

"The inside is outside the outside is inside. I want to navigate myself so I fit perfectly. There does not seem to be a power difference with these two images we have doubling, cloning, replication, balance, slotting together, and fitting in, synchronicity. Because the projection is over my face the bright light is quite strange. So did I learn anything? Speaking through an 'other' is also interesting. I did like the strangeness of this and the weirdness".

"Is this all about the trauma of the lost unity with 'self' seeking what has been left behind through a dislocation? Perhaps through the alignment of 'actual self' and digital other' we can strip away the veil of the real. As we exist between the real and the imaginary ie the symbolic (Lacan) we imagine the real. Maybe rather than imagine the Real (a deeper embodiment with oneself and others) perhaps embodiment is where we self-touch".

Inter-Reactive Exploration II



Mander Centre: Window A



Mander Centre window B

I decided to place the live video projection in the shop window to see how people would respond. This involved putting the 'live' footage on a delay with the video camera placed in the window pointing towards participants passing by. The camera was placed carefully so it was not intrusive. As people passed by they caught their 'live' image of themselves on a delay of 2 seconds so they could interact with themselves and/or others in the same space. Interestingly when the doors of the shop were closed I got a lot of interest where people came over to see themselves. Less people when the shop doors were open".

"I also placed another piece of work in the other window called Window B: this consisted of a picture frame, back projection and a live webcam using a delay. Both Windows used delays. The delay on Window A was faster than Window B. I have not looked at the results yet. I sat in the Orange shop opposite today just observing people. Most people went by either unfazed, avoidance, or fun. Some school children hurriedly passed Window A once they recognized themselves in the image".

Some responses to windows A & B

Window A

"I am curious to know how it's made" ... "It's strange"... "I don't like watching myself"... "yeah its uncanny"

"It's different ...I can see myself speaking...it's disorientating...its good I am catching myself speaking watching myself...it is uncanny...its interesting it tells you more about yourself...its quite good to look at...its present and past all in one go."

Window B

"oh that's neat...I came out three times...there is three of me...your moving I am moving and I am not moving...it moves when I am still...it is surprising"

"...this one is really weird ...I can't describe it...its frightening...it's so weird...I am going to video it"

"Oh no way man...it's the new mirror...I want it for my bedroom"

"There is no artistic expression you have just turned a machine on...your just filming stuff...it's not art...the machine is quite talented"

Window B was also placed at the Bessant Gallery at Wolverhampton University and a one evening event at the Universities MA open evening. Informants were also asked to complete the same questionnaire supplied in the Mander Centre. The following is one response from an informant.

"I think when it just you there is something quite extraordinary about it...you become less self conscious...its interesting when you do match up there is a reward for that when it happens...it works nice spatially...its quite intimate...you say damn when you just miss yourself"



Window B at the Bessant Gallery 2010

I-RE II: Questionnaire: Feedback and Responses from Informants

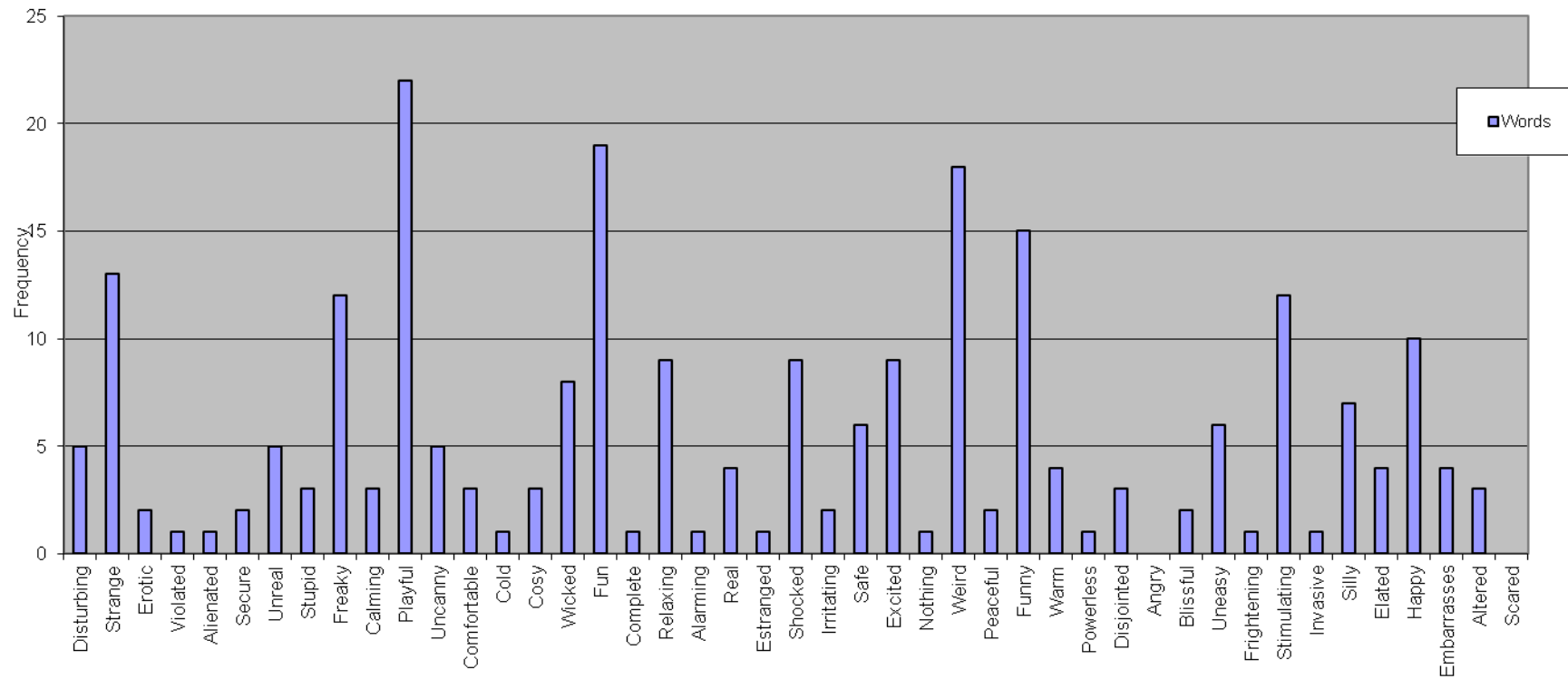
This information is part of a practice-led doctoral research which will be kept anonymous. Thank you for your support.

Q1. Can you please describe your emotional response to the work

Q2. Can you please circle any words that relate to your experience? If you cannot see a word that relates to your experience please feel free to add your own words in the blank boxes.

Disturbing	Calming	Relaxing	Weird	Frightening
Strange	Playful	Alarming	Peaceful	Stimulating
Erotic	Uncanny	Real	Funny	Invasive
Violated	Comfortable	Estranged	Warm	Silly
Alienated	Cold	Shocked	Powerless	Elated
Secure	Cosy	Irritating	Disjointed	Happy
Unreal	Wicked	Safe	Angry	Embarrassed
Stupid	Fun	Excited	Blissful	Altered
Freaky	Complete	Nothing	Uneasy	Scared

Graph 1
Window B:
Combined (Mander, Wolves & Bessant) frequency of words associated with Virtual Portrait



Inter-Reactive Exploration III



Eagleworks Studios I-RE (iii)

'Knee jerk' reactions from informants at Eagleworks Studios

The following responses are from the opening event where I used my video camera as a tool to record the ambiance of the evening and to ask all informants the same question about their first-hand experience.

Informants

1. **(Male)** *"I Felt I wanted to match you... I was confronted by my own image rather than yours... unsettling when images are synchronized... it was uncannily matched-odd".*
2. **(Male)** *"I felt a little uneasy ...felt like I was being possessed and gradually I relaxed. I found it intriguing and then funny...it made me aware of what I was feeling too... my sensory experience. I felt my wine slipping down my chest. It is not often you feel things so intensely... I was concentrating on myself rather than what I was looking at.. I was worried when I felt you in my periphery position... blowing me out made me feel insignificant and small...eating me a sort of feeling of possession".*
3. **(Male)** *"I thought of avatars...the audience narrates and develops the experience themselves".*
4. **(Female)** *"It was a shock to see my picture up there...I found it disconcerting to see myself I did not want to be in the way of your image. I was intrigued by what you*

were trying to establish and a little in ore on how comfortable you were in front of the camera...most of us don't look at ourselves...you have looked at yourself many times...we only see a part of ourselves we do not take in the whole e.g. a ladder in a stocking- a check and run...the examination of the face in detail I found most intriguing...drawing oneself in was disconcerting. Whereas when you have yourself as the double it calls on films that have done a similar thing and it feels more comfortable territory...this actually felt more disconcerting territory .”

5. (Female) “it was something different... not what I was expecting...something I did not expect...one person at a time made it more interesting... I started mirroring what the person was doing on the video”

6. (Female) “I started to see what I looked like ... I am totally narcissistic. I felt like you were looking inside me...looking at me... I was really self conscious”

7. (Male) “the ownership of yourself has been taken away from you...your not yourself anymore...you're not yourself anymore your image is so large...you the subject has become someone else...the self image has become dominated over...is not what I expect... you want to engage in the happening”

8. (Female) “I really enjoyed it...I loved the blowing...I found myself looking at you more than myself... I found it really peaceful”

9. (Male) “I felt lost... it was a very engaging experience... in a funny way you find out more about yourself when you put yourself against another self”

10.(Male) “it was almost like watching myself... how I imagine myself to be if I was born female rather than male... I have now become to realize that my features are more feminine... I don't know whether I should be afraid of it... or if it troubles me or not... maybe I should milk it in a sense it's a strange confrontation of one's own representation.... I need to think about this at length”

11. (Male) “It's weird...when you touch your face its weird...I was memorized by it... it was really intimate... I felt you were actually there in the same place”

12.13.14 (3 Males together talking) “Err the more I saw my own image in the screen overlaid it did not seem right...I realize I was moving with it... I felt both images were merging into one image...it was surreal...the blowing was like it was in my own ear...it was pretty strange...I felt I was mimicking you and I had to pull myself away from it...to break away from the mimicking... and you can't do it anymore... I realized I had been mimicking you the whole time... it was an interesting experience. You become one and you can't tell which is your face and your own face...when you yawned I opened my mouth and I did not know if it was you or me yawning...I got confused which was me or you...it blurs the line between you and me...I was trying to work out which one was me...I moved with you...because of the mirroring you move the wrong way because it's the other way round...it breaks the fluid at it...it's like throwing a pebble in the water and it's a ripple...I felt you blowing in my ear...with the hand on the face you believe your touching your own face...I felt and I believed I should feel the hand on my face...you expect to feel something...what confused me was it my own hand or your hand touching the face...it was really weird...total bizarre...you naturally follow her movements “

15. (Male) *"it was strange watching myself watch you. I felt unnerved being so close to somebody...it was weird...like an empty presence. Especially when you were rubbing your face and your hair, I felt detached from everything. I tried to line up with you. When I did it felt weird...I felt like I lost a sense of where I was. I did not feel separate from myself like a here and there at the same time. I did feel a closer unity with myself. What you were trying to achieve were someone in a sense is losing themselves...its engaging".*

16 *"I really like it ... very intimate... felt really peaceful...mesmerizing"*

17 (Female) *"It's like you have become a elemental force...I felt it was an unequal relationship....shock....spooky....scary....visceral and elemental"*

18 (Male) *"It's a fight for an ownership of the real"*

19(Female) *"When you moved out of the frame it brought me back to looking at myself which I did not like. But when we merged I felt comfortable. I could slowly melt back into this non real reality"*

20 (Male) *"It's aggressive and forceful sitting in there...it's not passive is it?"*

Knee-jerk responses at the Mander Centre

21 (Female) *"It was surprising and you suddenly look at your face. It's swallowed by someone else it's a very strange feeling...its relaxing and also scary when your being swallowed by someone. When the images mix together it's not weird it's good to look at. I really liked it..."*

22 (Female) *"When it started off with a yawn ... it did not get me to yawn I thought it was trying to get me to yawn...it's a strange feeling. I can't really describe it really... parts were erotic as well ... it was just strange. Q Can you elaborate on the word strange? I spent a lot of time looking at what I was looking at which was strange... I thought at first it was weird and then I got used to it ... I would say strange would be a good word"*

23 (Female) *It was bizarre...looking at me looking at you...it was a bit dizzy...and quite funky...looking at her...kind of between two realities, looking at her looking at me...seeing me made me focus on me and my face...I felt self conscious...it felt naughty being in the dark...it was bizarre and surreal...I felt I was mimicking you and its odd capturing yourself doing it...it was good...*

24 (Female) *"I thought it was brilliant and really relaxing...I loved it I want to take it home...it was totally surreal".*

25 (Male) *" Yeah it was scary at first ..."*

26 (Male) *"I was interested ...I got more interested in me gurning. Q what is gurning? When you move your mouth to the side and twist it".*

27 (Male) *"I found it provocative...it was weird and eerie maybe because of the confined space...it was spooky...I am sure I felt something touch my arm...I was starting to feel drowsy".*

28 (Male) *"I felt I was in a porn movie but felt safe because it was on a delay...the delay eroticised it and made me more interested in myself and it coming up seconds later...I felt like a voyeur rather than violated due to the delay...the delay enabled me to distance myself...I felt protected by the delay".*

29 (Female) *"I spent a lot of time looking at my hair...I felt I was at the side. I felt a little bit uncomfortable...I felt I was intruding".*

30 (Male) *"I thought it was scary and spooky...overlapping of the images of the face became psychologically affecting me...your face and my face so it was spooky like a horror movie like the exorcist...only a little bit scary...when I heard your breath it had more of a sexual connotation... without the sound it was more scary...with the mouth open it became more sexual...I felt it was psychologically a bit mentally messing with you but not a strong reaction."*

31 (Male) *"Ha ha...it was quite good I quite liked it...I am still thinking about it...it was uncomfortable. I don't like somebody breathing in my ear..."*

32 (Female) *"Oh my god it was really scary...because of the superimposed image...my face was very passive and you were very active".*

33 (Male) *"It was really weird odd...spooky...I couldn't tell who was who..."*

Inter-Reactive Exploration IV



In[bodi]mental at The Public West Bromwich June 2011

Feedback from 30 Informants

Table 1: Statements of how informants felt

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree/disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Felt weird	13	12	2	3	0
Beyond words	2	7	13	7	1
Felt uneasy	0	4	10	13	3
I felt more complete	0	3	13	11	3
I felt secure	2	10	9	7	1
It felt uncanny	2	12	11	3	0
I felt frightened	0	1	1	13	12

Table 2: Embodiment

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree/Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Inhabited their body	3	17	4	4	2
Did not feel my body was my own	3	15	4	4	3
Felt their body was real	3	15	8	3	1
It connected on a emotional level	0	7	11	9	1
I felt part of the other person	4	12	4	6	3
I connected with a part of myself unknown to me	1	7	9	9	3
I felt the other person touching my body	3	8	3	12	3

Table 3: Awareness

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree/Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I was in a heightened reality	3	14	7	4	0
I was more ware of myself	1	12	7	9	0
I felt not in the real world	1	9	10	7	1
Felt divided from the other person	1	7	11	8	1
Felt not in this world but another	2	8	9	5	3

Some responses from Informants on the day: 4.06.11

(Female) Childs response said *"It felt strange...I did not feel my dad's legs were mine".*

(Male) Child *"It was a weird good experience....very interesting...really clever...it was quite convincing that it was my body (my dad's that is). It was more convincing my dad's body was on me when we stood up and rubbed stomachs...it was very weird".*

(Male) Adult *"I felt it was most effective when we were standing up...its quite strange...after a while you try to synchronize yourself and match the action intuitively...I feel the more immersive the experience I think the body can be tricked into believing the other body is yours...erm I would say it was initially a strange experience"*

(Male adult) *"The more it's synchronized the more you doubt your feelings"*

(Male child) *"I felt I was my mum and my mum was me....it was most effective when we had the little hand ball...I liked that best...I was a little confused and I managed to gain control...I did copy my mum and it was strange and totally weird"*

(Adult) *"It was well weird"*

(Adult) *"It was weird"*

(Child Male) *"It felt really weird...I did not feel that Danielle's body was mine"*

(Teenager) *"Whenever I moved she copied...I felt like I was her"*

(Teenager) *"It was unrealistic and I felt her body was mine...it was also real"*

(Adult) *"I don't get much of a crossover as I identify with your body/hands all the time. I don't believe your hands are mine"*

(Adult) *"I believe your hands are mine"*

(Adult Female) *"when we shook hands and they crossed over...'Oh yes now that is strange...that's more like it"*

(Adult Female) *"I still keep my own feelings when we rub stomachs...but if you were wearing my clothes it would be weird"*

My own experience

"I really did feel that her hand and legs were mine especially when our movements were synchronized. Danielle started drawing with a pen on her hand and I believed she was drawing on my hand and that was weird for me. I poured hand cream into my hands and rubbed it in. I asked Danielle to copy my actions and she said she really felt the cream on her hands even though the cream was in fact on my hands"

Appendix 2

10 Interviews

Inter-Reactive Exploration III

Informants interviewed in the actual space



1. Male (J) Second Experience

Q. Researcher: "Is there anything different from your first experience"?

A. "felt there was a slight eroticism I had not noticed the first time...it did not dominate the experience though".

Q. Researcher: "When the two faces where perfectly aligned do you think you experienced something more about you generally"?

A. "I don't think so no... if I see a photograph of myself I am interested in looking at myself but not in this case".

Q Researcher: *"You mentioned it was uncanny last time what did you mean"?*

A. *"The first time produced a genuine feeling of the uncanny. It was unsettling because I could believe it was a real person...another person even though I knew it was not another person (during alignment)...this is when the faces were aligned".*

Q. Researcher: *"What do you think we mean by uncanny"?*

A. *"A strange unsettling"*

Q Researcher: *"Do you think this experience adds more to a heightened reality, beyond the symbolic"?*

A. *"I am not sure I was taken away from what I perceive as reality".*

Q Researcher: *"Did you feel more embodied to me or yourself or somehow more separate during the alignment"?"*

A. *"There was a state where I found myself changing between how I relate to the image of me the image of you and the coming together of the two faces...it was the idea of them coming together...I tried to line up with you and at other times I deliberately tried not to line up with you. I was more pro-active trying not to align. If I look at a photo of myself I feel separated...I feel a little confused by this though".*

Q Researcher: *"Has it heightened your awareness of yourself"?"*

A. *"It allows me to scrutinize my own face..."*

Q Researcher: *"Are there any key words you would use"?"*

A. *"Unsettling... a game being played...I felt you wanted me to do something to fulfill your expectation to please your expectation".'*

Q Researcher: *"Where there any key moments"?"*

A. John: *'When you yawned it was disturbing because I had aligned myself with you and it did not appeal to me'.*

Q Researcher: *'Did you feel we were part of each other'?"*

A. *"I feel I was very aware of what was going on so no".*

Q Researcher: *‘Were you taken beyond yourself during alignment’?*

A. *“I did feel I was a third part to something”.*

2. Female (J) First Experience

Q. Researcher. *“Can you tell me how you felt in that experience”?*

A. *“It was weird and surreal...it’s like looking in a mirror where I am half watching me and half watching you. It triggered more thoughts when you were blowing”.*

Q Researcher: *“Did you align yourself with me”?*

A. *“No...to start with I avoided looking at the camera...the longer I sat the more relaxed I became. I did not feel the need to align myself”.*

Q Researcher: *“Did you feel my presence”?*

A. *“Yeah...especially the close ups of your face it felt like you really knew me...it was intimate and persona”.*

Q Researcher: *“Did you feel more aware of yourself”?*

A. *“Yeah definitely...I don’t spend a lot of time looking at myself...but like the scale and you were not fully on the screen I was forced to confront myself”.*

Q Researcher: *“Did you feel more embodied with me or yourself, or did you feel more separate”?*

A. *“The more the video went on I became more of the background... I did start to feel more a part of the video...Err I find when you touched your face I felt I wanted to touch my face...I did not realize I was doing it...I did not feel compelled to touch my face...I expected to yawn but I did not. As the video went on I felt more conscious of me”.*

Q Researcher: *“Did you feel in two places at once”?*

A. *“No I was aware I was sat here”.*

3. Male (M) Second Experience

Q Researcher: *"Was the second time around different"?*

A. *"It was more intense an intrusive feeling of being inside your head with sensual sounds and thoughts...it was not because I was on my own though".*

Q Researcher: *"Did you feel it was difficult to describe"?*

A. *"I felt guilty about being so intimate with you"*

Q Researcher: *"Did you try and align yourself with me"?*

A. *"Only the first time, but not the second time... It was a seductive experience and I felt I was being a little bit err deceitful as regards to my relationship with my wife and I was not invited by you as a person to be that close to you".*

Q Researcher: *"When you aligned yourself the first time did you feel more embodied to me or not"?*

A. *"The first time was more a humorous mode the second time round as we are on our own it helped me be more seduced intimately with you".*

Q Researcher: *"Due to the synchronicity did you feel your body was transported somewhere else... what I mean is where you here and there"?*

A. *"I become part of the film and it wasn't easy to be objective as opposed to subjective to the image".*

Q Researcher: *"Did you feel separated from yourself and/or unified"?*

A. *"When I felt I was intruding on the projected image I found it difficult to see it as a film and as I know you... I have admired your character"*

Q Researcher: *"Did you have a heightened awareness of yourself"?*

A. *"Only as much as it made me err aroused to the image I did not want to be intimate with the image".*

Q Researcher: *"Could you feel my presence"?*

A. *"With earphones on yes as they did remind me of those experiences only the individual themselves can feel... like swallowing, lip smacking etc"*

Q Researcher: *"Did you feel I was touching you"?*

A. *"No I felt the image was you".*

Q Researcher: *"Did you want to copy my movements"?*

A. *"Yes the first time as I was in a good mood. The second time round I disassociated myself from the image".*

Q Researcher: *"Can you describe any key moments"?*

A. *"I was listening to your breath...and err, was interrupted by music from somewhere".*

Q Researcher: *"Did you feel I was part of you"?*

A. *"Only an extension of the history of our relationship which added to the human elements I felt about you".*

Q Researcher: *"Is there anything you want to say"?*

A. *"I can see how this subliminally imposing emotions on the viewer that's why they are banned in films and advertising".*

4. Female (K) First Experience.

Q Researcher: *"What was your first initial experience"?*

A. *"The sound got me more than the visual... opening and closing your mouth... you were in my head...I tried to match up with your face...the sound sent shivers down my spine especially when you blew...I felt you were behind me...I felt we melted and we were one thing...suddenly I got back to me when I could see me... I lost myself in you. I was expecting to feel really uneasy and felt like you were over taking my body. That did not happen. I felt like I was one. ...it was one we were one with the image...it was not you and it was not me ...it was your hair and the shivers run down my spine...I knew you were touching your face but I was getting the sensation".*

Q Researcher: *"What words would you use to describe emotions"?*

A. *"It was really calming...when you opened your mouth it became more than real and a bit uneasy and consumed by the image...yeah it went from safe and intimate to being very very small when you opened your mouth...it was ..it felt safe and not between two people...you were not you and I was not me it was something else...I felt a body extension...when I saw my face it brought me back to where I am sitting".*

Q Researcher: *"What did you mean by strange"?*

A. *"You get lost in it to a degree...you forget you're being filmed".*

Q Researcher: *"Do you think you lost yourself"?*

A. *"Oh yes you do...I lost myself in the work but I did not lose the sense I was sitting here".*

Q Researcher: *"During alignment did you feel more embodied"?*

A *"I wanted my face to fit with yours...it felt right...it was not weird or uncomfortable I forgot you and forgot me".*

Q Researcher *"Did you feel your body was transported but it was still here"?*

A. *"Yeah"*

Q Researcher: *"Did you have a heightened unity with the image"?*

A. *"I was expecting to feel like the same relationship we have as friends. I thought it would be a bit strange...it was a completely different experience with you".*

Q Researcher: *"Was there a different level of consciousnesses"?*

A *"definitely yes...there was something I achieved with the technology which I could not experience otherwise. It was some other reality".*

Q Researcher: *"Could you feel my presence"?*

A *"Yes it felt like your presence was my presence...we were both breathing at the same time...it was a new thing...a new other...not me and you...when I was not merging with you there was a switch like when you yawned ...I was fascinated...when it was really close up this other had changed into something else when I saw your chin it was less comfortable. I did not feel I was touching you or vice*

versa...it was interesting...it was strange. You were one but not in a way you would experience”.

5. Female (B) Second Experience.

Q Researcher: “Was there something different second time around”?

A ““Yeah the first time I was concentrating on you... this time round I looked more to see what you were doing. First time I was more shocked and this time I knew what to expect. First time it was about you and second time about me. This time I was trying to match myself up and at one point I merged it was spot on it was brilliant. I thought I got it right...I wanted to get it exactly right...I could imagine what your skull was like”.

Q Researcher: “Were you more embodied during alignment”?

A “I don’t know...I just felt like I wanted to get it right...I can’t describe the feeling...I was determined to get it right”.

Q Researcher: “Did something click inside you”?

A ““When I was lined up I got it correct...it was a hard thing to explain...I achieved it”.

Q Researcher: “Did you synchronize with me”?

A “No not at the beginning...second time I did. The first time was about emotions and the second time was about aesthetics. I was not aware of my body... the body is just a carrier to move around”.

Q Researcher: “Were there any moments of a union...like a oneness or not”?

A “I had no feelings”.

Q Researcher: “Was there a heightened awareness of you”?

A ““Maybe ...it might ...I don’t know”.

Q Researcher: “Any key words for emotions in this experience”?

A “In the first one I felt you had invaded my privacy...this time it was rawer”.

Q Researcher: “Did you feel my presence”?

A *"Because I know you as a person this is not you...I know you so I view it differently".*

Q Researcher: *"Did experiences change"?*

A *"When you put your hand out...I started copying you...mirroring you".*

Q Researcher: *"Does mirroring make you feel comfortable"?*

A *"Oh yes definitely...I feel comfortable mirroring I am very aware I do it".*

Q Researcher: *"Were we part of each other"?*

A *"No because I don't feel part of myself...I was part of the work but not part of you...we were not together at any point...there was nothing scary about it...except seeing myself".*

Q Researcher: *"What is the difference between this and a mirror"?*

A *"In a mirror your checking your ok...it is a point of reference...to check it's ok...you're not conscious your doing it...you're not aware of your body unless it's in trouble or your ill etc. In a mirror your checking your in the world...it's not a vanity thing it's to check your ok. But in the video it goes beyond the surface, it's deeper. I think I have contradicted myself I said first time it was about emotions and the second about alignment I think this is emotional. I can check everything in the video that I could not check as a reference point in the video...mirrors they're restricted".*

6. Male (I) Second Experience

Q Researcher: *"Was it different from the first time"?*

A *"Yeah it was different from the first experience...I have put some weight on since...last time I could superimpose my face onto yours...this time because I am heavier it felt weird not being able to line up my face onto yours".*

Q Researcher: *"Was this experience focusing on trying to align yourself with me"?*

A *"Yeah much more this time...at the first time I felt possessed and then I got used to it...what the composite face looked like...before it was more aligned exactly and it was almost like androgynous but I could not do it today".*

Q Researcher: *"Did you learn more about yourself"?*

A *"I think what's interesting is the way a different mood can influence it...I have just come from spouting political slogans in the street and I am more serious...last time I was more in the mood for fun...also this time a I am not as shocked as last time being eaten and the blowing".*

Q Researcher: *"Did you feel more embodied"?*

A *"Not so much this time...last time I felt I was taken over. It was quite fun last time it made me laugh out of fun and uneasiness".*

Q Researcher: *"Did you want to synchronize"?*

A *"Yeah"*

Q Researcher: *"Did you feel separate from yourself"?*

A *"Yes...the first time after about eight minutes it got difficult to define what was me and what was you. So when you're more aware of yourself you feel separate".*

Q Researcher: *"Did you feel a oneness's at all"?*

A *"Sort of...because you're looking out all the time for what is you you're always looking for you in the other".*

Q Researcher: *"Do you think awareness is associated with a oneness"?*

A *"I think so yeah".*

Q Researcher: *"Did you feel my presence"?*

A *"Yeah"*

Q Researcher: *"Did you mimic me"?*

A *"This time I did more than the last time as I could predict what you were going to do".*

Q Researcher: *"Was there any key moments"?*

A *"I would scratch myself...not sure if it's a uncomfortable itchy that was posed on me etc".*

Q Researcher: *"What emotions did you feel"?*

A *"Err I went through a number of feelings ...especially the first time were of surprise, discomfort, sensuous...and awareness and then more uneasiness again".*

Q Researcher: *"Did you feel we were part of each other at all"?*

A *"Sort of...yeah..I think cos I know you I would have felt more uncomfortable if I did not know you".*

Q Researcher: *"Is there a difference between this and a mirror"?*

A *"Ha ha... yeah in the sense there is something else being superimposed on you...it's not a spec of dust on the mirror it's another human form...you react differently. If it was an object obscuring the mirror...I think when looking at myself the difference is the time delay which you would not get with a mirror when speaking into it, it would not have a delay it would be instant".*

Q Researcher: *"Did you feel your body was transported"?*

A *"At times yeah ... when the image moved in and out"*

Q Researcher: *"Is there anything you would like to add"?*

A *"I am interested how its different from the first experience and if it's cos I know what's coming or whether it's something else I am not quite sure...the first time produced a genuine feeling of the uncanny when you have never done it before".*

Q Researcher: *"Do you think you get used to it second time around"?*

A *"Yes sure"*

7. Female (D) First Experience.

Q Researcher: "Can you describe your feelings"?

A *"I thought it would be scary and intimidating. I felt it was playful and warm...with a blonde wig and long hair... it made me interested in how I look...it was very playful, warm and friendly. The breath was a intimate warm feeling that embellishes you".*

Q Researcher: "Did you experience more of yourself"?

A *"It just made me feel really funny...also I know you and playing with your image is fun like a female playmate like trying to fit the face...I was really wanting to align myself to you...it was frustrating as I wanted to play more".*

Q Researcher: "How did alignment feel"?

A *"It was engaging ... very comforting...not threatening...a sisterly thing....when you empathize with people you empathize in a visual way...I did mimic and overlap, overlay ...it's like two children playing"*

Q Researcher: "Were you more embodied"?

A *"I was too aware of what was going on to be embodied...I did not feel pulled in...I did not feel transported".*

Q Researcher: "Did you feel separate at all"?

A *"I felt I lost something when it finished...I did not want it to stop playing with me"*

Q Researcher: "Was there a oneness"?

A *"The aim of the play was aiming at the oneness and merging with the image...that's the aim...you know your not going to achieve it".*

Q Researcher: "Did you feel my presence"?

A *"It was not you...it was familiar...it was only your image".*

Q Researcher: "How would you respond if you did not know me"?

A *"I think I would have felt differently, less comfortable".*

Q Researcher: *"Did you feel I was touching you"?*

A: *"No not at all...only a soft regret you had gone when you were moving to the side...I could not join you when you moved to the side".*

Q Researcher: *"Were we part of each other"?*

A *"No...once the objective had been achieved ie the alignment, then it was not a feeling of being part of you only the objective to be achieved".*

Q Researcher: *"Did it feel uncanny"?*

A *"No...it was too familiar to be uncanny ...it might be done with someone I don't know".*

Q Researcher: *"What's the difference between this and a mirror"?*

A *"When the headphones are on you feel underwater, and I felt more distant...I felt removed rather than close to the other"*

8. Male (S) Second Experience.

Q Researcher: *"Can you explain to me how you feel"?*

A *"I felt the eyes did not belong to me...I felt this was very interesting...something about identity...when I matched my eyes up it felt more like me...it produces a different person".*

Q Researcher: *"During alignment did you feel more of a unity etc"?*

A *"I would have felt we joined up somehow...but later I felt it was a different person...the first time I felt joined in you...this time I felt I was producing a third person".*

Q Researcher: *"Did you want to copy me"?*

A *"Yeah the first time I did. I think I was just moving".*

Q Researcher: *"Did you feel you body was transported somewhere else ie in two places at once"?*

A *"I felt I was there and I forgot I was sitting here. I thought I was looking at me".*

Q Researcher: *"Did you feel a unity or separateness with the work"?*

A *"I felt unnerved by the close up mouth thing...I wanted to get away from that...I was quite happy to be with your full face".*

Q Researcher: *"Did you want to copy me"?*

A *"Yeah I did and I was reacting to you"*

Q Researcher: *"Could you feel my presence"?*

A *"Sort of...I felt some actions were contrived...unnatural...perhaps if it was a film of you doing what you normally do then I think I would of felt more of your presence".*

Q Researcher: *"Was there any key moments"?*

A *"Yeah I did not like the mouth...I wanted to move away....the sideways gestures were quite at ease and a bit uneasy also".*

Q Researcher: *"Did you feel I was part of you or vice versa"?*

A. *"At times I felt I was part of your image when we matched up"*

Q Researcher *"Did you feel me touching you"?*

A *"No I did not".*

Q Researcher: *"Is there something more real about the video image rather than a mirror"?*

A *"Oh yeah the video image is more real...your limited with your gaze in a mirror so you always see yourself in a certain direction and in this situation I can see more...the depth of image is different".*

9. Female (J) Second Experience

Q Researcher: *"Can you explain to me your second experience"?*

A. *"I looked more at myself this time...the first time I looked at you more".*

Q Researcher: *"Did you want to line up with my image"?*

A *"No, not at all in both times"*

Q Researcher: *"Did you feel more embodied"?*

A *"I felt more apart of you when you were blowing and feeling you were going to swallow...I also felt quite separate from myself".*

Q Researcher: *"Did you want to copy me"?*

A *"No not at all"*

Q Researcher: *"Did you feel your body was taken into the work and being in two places at once"?*

A *"I physically knew I was here but the sound of the blowing took me somewhere else like on holiday".*

Q Researcher: *"Has the work added anything to you"?*

A *"This time I feel more comfortable".*

Q Researcher: *"What key words would you use"?*

A *"It was relaxing I think...you would not expect it to be relaxing so it was rather odd".*

Q Researcher: *"Did you feel my presence"?*

A *"Only a little but I knew you were always on the screen".*

Q Researcher: *"Did you feel I was touching you"?*

A *"No but there was times I felt you were walking around me".*

Q Researcher: *"Did you feel I was part of you at all"?*

A *"No I felt we really knew each other even though we don't".*

Q Researcher: *"What is different from this and a mirror"?*

A *"In a mirror you're critical of yourself as your looking for a reason to see how you look. It's different from a mirror".*

Q Researcher: *"What is more real the mirror or the video"?*

A *"I would say the video is more real it's a truer reflection of how others see you. It's more accurate".*

10. Male (E) Second Experience

Q Researcher: *"Was it different from the first time"?*

A: *"Yeah I had more time to consider the impact and I knew what to expect and reflect. I knew what I wanted to this time. I did not feel lost like the first time. Then I was looking for my other...after thinking about it it's not my other...it's your other...it's not my other...no that video image is me and not my other. Through my virtual meeting of both of us it's not. I wanted to line up with your alignment...its interesting when faces match up its different to distinguish who is who even though we have totally different faces".*

Q Researcher: *"Did you feel I was touching you"?*

A *"No it's me trying to catch up with you...it's not about your actions affecting me ...it's about you being a role model where you are leading me".*

Q Researcher: *"During alignment do you think it creates another being"?*

A *"I don't know...it creates an impression of another being".*

Q Researcher: *"Were you more embodied to me"?*

A *"Yeah I felt closer to your image and not mine...while I was experiencing it I was trying to get close to you".*

Q Researcher: *"Were you in two places at once"?*

A *"Yeah but in the context of a virtual mirror...you never have a mirror that plays back an image...that's while it's interesting".*

Q Researcher: *"What is the difference between this and a mirror"?*

A *"This goes beyond a mirror...there is a background to it".*

Q Researcher: *"Is the video more real than a mirror"?*

A *“No I can’t distinguish between them...in both cases it’s a reflection of me...it’s the reflection that matters....I followed you around and wanted to align up to you. Once you participate you stop questioning it and it pulls you in”.*

Q Researcher: *“Did you feel separate”?*

A *“No”*

Q Researcher: *“Did you feel a unity with yourself”?*

A *“Yeah I felt more conscious of myself...this tracing of the movements gives me a heightened awareness or I am more aware of myself”.*

Q Researcher: *“Did you feel my presence”?*

A *“No I received it but I did not feel it”.*

Q Researcher: *“Did you mimic me”?*

A *“Yeah”*

Q Researcher: *“Was there any key moments”?*

A *“The first time it was alignment and the second time it was the sound. With sound there is no intellectual divide its closer to you. With the sound there is no escape but with alignment you can move out the way...I felt that both of us were part of something we created something other...something new...I was not you and you were not me...me being here is about us creating something other...that digital image of me is not my other...its two others coming together. It’s a step beyond...I did not feel a part of you or you part of me...this is new to me.*

Me being here is not about the other or my other... the other is the social expectations of ourselves ... the only way that could be my other is by me imposing my image of myself over my pre-recorded image over me. The only way that could be my other is if it was me...you see the other is a concept on how we see ourselves”.

Appendix 3

Technical specification: Inter-Reactive Explorations I-REs I-IV

I-RE I :Studio projects i-vi

1 Digital video camera

1 Laptop

1 Video Projector

1 extra long firewire

1 tripod

Computer software: windows movie maker

I-RE II: Mander Shopping Centre

Window A:1 Digital Video Camera

1 PC

1Video Projector

2 USB leads

1 Tripod

Computer software: Isadora

Window B: 1 Webcam

1 Laptop

1 Video Projector

A Picture Frame

Computer Software: Isadora

I-RE III: Eagleworks Studios

1 Digital Video Camera

1 Laptop

1 Video Projector

1 Tripod

2 USB extenders

1 Headphone

Computer Software: Isadora

I-RE IV: The Public

2 LCD TV Monitors

2 Laptops

2 Vusix Head Mounted Display Systems HMD

1 Video Splitter

Computer Software: Isadora

Endnotes

Introduction

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Chapter one

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- 26 Ibid. Lacan drew on animal ethology that brought about formative effects comparable to that described in the Mirror Stage. He states "These reflections lead me to recognize in the spatial capitulation manifested in the mirror-stage, even before the social dialectic, the effect in man of an organic insufficiency in his natural reality – in so far as any meaning can be given to the word 'nature'. I am led therefore, to regard the function of the mirror-stage as a particular case of the function of the imago, which is to establish a relation between the organism and its reality – or, as they say, between

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Chapter Two

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